

Highlighted File Matched by Copyfind

Kerry Segrave begins citing New York Times articles on the 2nd page of *Shoplifting*, so the file doesn't begin at the beginning of the book

Green—direct quotations
Red—identical phrase found in *New York Times* articles

On December 27, 1863, Peter Hefferman (alias Peter Dunn, alias James Johnson) and his wife were arrested and charged with grand larceny, stealing watches and jewelry from the store of a Mr. Bronte. Already well known to the police, the Heffermans attracted the attention of police officer Timothy Golden when they were coming out of their residence in the morning. Golden followed them, saw them enter Bronte's, followed them to several other places, saw them enter a saloon, followed them in and arrested them. He found a box containing the watches and jewelry in Hefferman's pocket. After Hefferman was found guilty, a report comments, "The conviction of this man disposes of one of the most successful shoplifters that has been known in this country for years. The prisoner and his wife possessed the advantages of genteel address, respectable appearance and great shrewdness, and are reported to have accumulated a fortune by thieving and shoplifting."²

Mary Brown, alias Frances Stanley "an expert shoplifter," pled guilty in June 1865 to a charge of grand larceny (shoplifting) for stealing from a store. Brown had only recently been released from state prison after servicing 4½ years for a similar offence.

After receiving several complaints of shoplifters operating in stores in the Canal Street area of New York, Captain Irving of the detective squad set out in February 1874 to stop the offenders. Irving and his partner toured the area where they saw Mary Moore, "Long Mary, a well-known shoplifter," alias come out of a store. They followed her into a saloon where they arrested her. When apprehended, said one account "She took from under her skirts a large linen bag, such as is usually worn by professional shoplifters, and handed it to Capt. Irving. The bag was found to contain several boxes of kid gloves, ten boxes of mohair braids and several other articles valued in all at \$180, which she had stolen from the store in Walker Street, while examining the stock under the pretense of desiring to make purchases." Long Mary was also described as "one of the adroitest shoplifters in the City."⁴

About one year later "a notorious shop-lifter" by the name of Christina Meyer was arrested on a charge of stealing a piece of silk worth \$80 from the store of Lord and Taylor. She was assisted by two men and a woman, all of whom escaped. In the rooms where the four lived, police found a large quantity of property consisting of valuable shawls, ladies' underwear, spoons, knives, forks, bead work and three pawn tickets for gold watches. The men had each served five-year prison terms, for shoplifting.⁵

In January 1876 Julien Blum, Moses Leon, and Morris Klein entered the store of Henry Shaw at different times and met outside after reconnoitering the place. Blum pretended that he wanted to purchase linen. They were noticed by two detectives who regarded their movements as

suspicious and determined to watch them. On the following day the three men returned to the store and upon leaving the shop were arrested and searched. On the persons of Klein and Leon were found four pieces of Belfast linen, stolen from Shaw's store and valued at \$140. Blum was found guilty at trial and sentenced to five years in state prison. The 77-year old Klein pled guilty, claiming he had been driven to the deed by poverty. He was sentenced to three years, "in consideration of his age." Out on bail, Leon had skipped town.⁶

Mary Ann Watts, alias Mary Wilson, a "clever" shoplifter, was convicted of larceny in December 1873 and sentenced to three years in Sing Sing. Three months later she escaped. Spotted by police in April 1876, then calling herself Mary Walker, she was arrested by police. Apprehended with her was her friend Annie Smith. A search of the pair resulted in the finding of a number of stolen items on Smith and 85 yards of silk in a wallet concealed under Watt's overskirt.⁷

The prevalence of shoplifting was increasing. In 1876 in Boston, Detectives Wood and Wiggin were watching especially for shoplifters. On one day they arrested Mary Brett and Mary Brown for shoplifting at the stores of Whitney and Stearns on Tremont Street. Goods valued at \$20 were found on the person of each. The pair were arraigned and fined an unreported amount. On the following day the two detectives greeted a train arriving from New York City and arrested the disembarking Mollie Hove, Sarah Clifford, and Mary Wilson, alias Frenchy Johnson, said to be "three of the most expert and notorious shoplifters to be found in this or any other county." They were put on a return train to New York a couple of hours later. Later that same day the pair of detective picked up Tilly Miller and Lena Nugent, alia Black Lena. Both women were wanted in Brooklyn after escaping from jail, where they had been placed for shoplifting offenses.⁸

A Fulton Street, Brooklyn, firm which sold hats and furs reported to the police in January 1877 that they had lost at different times during the previous six months a number of valuable sacques—a woman's loose-fitting jacket or cape. Assigned to the case, Detectives Corwin and Looney learned that on the day the last sacque disappeared "a well-dressed, lady-like young girl" had been seated in the store for some time, on the pretense she was waiting for her brother, who had promised to meet her there and buy her a sacque. Store employees thought she had been in the store on one ruse or another several times. Corwin and Looney then started a search of the pawn shops finally locating the sacque in question, along with a good description of the woman. Eventually they arrested Sarah Redmond who confessed she had been shoplifting for a long time. At her home a quantity of stolen items were found; on her person were 75 pawn tickets.⁹

That same year Rosa Rode and a male companion entered a store on Broadway in New York where the man priced some items while Rosa "lounged about the store." An employee saw the woman hide a box under her shawl. When the pair left the shop the employee followed them and summoned the police. Rosa was arrested but the male escaped. She was found to have seven dozen pairs of kid gloves hidden under her shawl and in her felt petticoat was an "immense pocket" which held two boxes containing nine more dozen pairs of kid gloves. Those 16 dozen pairs were valued at \$140. She was held for trial in lieu of \$5,000 bail. One week later she pled guilty and was sentenced to 3½ years in jail. This case illustrated the advantage females had over males in stashing goods on their persons. Rosa had manage to secrete almost 200 pairs of gloves on her person and almost got away with it. Even at this early period most of the shoplifters'

tricks, such as the booster bag to receive pilfered items, hidden within one's clothing, were already well known and well used¹⁰

Rosa did her time but was not long on the streets before again running afoul of the law. It was reported in April 1990 that Mary Scanlan, alias Rosy Rode—known as Kid Glove Rosie—and and Louisa Rice were “two notorious pickpockets” arrested in the act of stealing 180 yards of silk from a Broadway store. Both had prior shoplifting convictions. Scanlan chose a trial while Rice pled guilty. The judge noted that the large dry goods establishments in New York suffered great losses by the depredations of shoplifters and he was determined to administer severe punishment to all offenders brought before him. Scanlan received five years, while Rice received four years and nine months—in consideration of having “the full penalty,” pled guilty she had three months taken off.¹¹

Even then, Christmas was a popular time for shoplifting. It was easier to pilfer when the streets and stores were jammed. On December 24, 1877, Detective Lenahan was patrolling Brooklyn's Fulton Street. His suspicions were aroused by a woman who was in and out of many stores. Lenahan followed her but could spot no crime. Nonetheless Lenahan arrested Mary Mason, alias Catherine Connor, as she got off a streetcar. On her person she was found to have six pairs of kid gloves, three silk handkerchiefs, two bottles of cologne, a pair of bracelets, and a cigar holder in a morocco case. At her residence more stolen items were found.¹²

During the 1870s a transition began to take place in shoplifting reports. More and more it came to be viewed as a crime committed solely by women. At least partly this was due to the beginnings of mass retailing to a mass consumer base, in huge premises. Shopping was set up to attract primarily women. A second difference taking place at this time was that more and more women arrested for the offense were well-to-do, of good character. That is they were not lower class. This phenomenon would lead to a major change in how the justice system could deal with those accused of shoplifting. It was one thing to sentence a lower class women to many years in prison for shoplifting—as happened all the time. However, it was unthinkable that this would be done to upper class women. For that matter it was unthinkable that well-to-do women, whose only trouble with the law was shoplifting, would be treated like common criminals at all, notwithstanding that all lower class women so charged were so treated. Out of this difficulty was born the concept of kleptomania.

In the summer of 1876 a “fashionably-dressed” lady entered a store and inquired about the price of several bronzes. Just after she left, the clerk noticed a \$45 statuette of Mercury was missing. He chased after her and had her arrested by a police officer who found the item on her person. Initially she was held on \$1000 bail. A day later that was reduced to \$500 when a man arrived to make an affidavit to her good character. She was released on bail.¹³

Emma Deming was arrested on Christmas Eve 1880 in the store of B. Altman and Co. for shoplifting a bottle of cologne. When arrested she had the cologne on her person along with a small valise containing three pocketbooks, all identified as property of the firm. At the time of her arrest she offered to pay for the cologne but the offer was refused. Deming explained she could not remember whether or not she had left money on the counter to pay for the cologne, but she had intended to. She further explained she found the valise on the floor, picked it up and

while searching for the owner was suddenly arrested. At her trial witnesses testified to her good character. B. Altman indicated they were willing to withdraw the complaint. In the end, “the court declared that the good character of the prisoner strengthened the doubt it had entertained at the outset as to her guilt and rendered a verdict of acquittal.”¹⁴

Similar problems were happening in Europe. In Paris, France, during June 1877 the trial of three foreigners from Venezuela on shoplifting charges took place. The Defendants were persons of “good families, Mrs. Pulgar, wife of a former general and representative of Venezuela in Paris, her niece Ms. Lopez, and the latter’s husband.” The women were described as “elegantly dressed, of attractive and distinguished appearance.” This financially well-to-do trio was arrested after the theft of a sapphire ring at a store. A search of their apartment turned up a great quantity of stolen goods. Their method of operation was for Pulgar and Mr. Lopex to occupy the attention of the employees while the other woman “laid hands on anything near her.” The young woman got eight months in jail while the other two were each sentenced to a year and a day. Usually the wealthy never reached court on shoplifting charges—they paid their way out of trouble. However, a minority of retailers pursued a prosecute-all policy, in the belief that was the only way to reduce the practice. In that case, and assuming a judge was determined to be fair and not class-biased (not always true), upper class women ran the risk of prison time. That prospect made kleptomaniacs even more inviting as a saving strategy.¹⁵

The existence of gangs of professional shoplifters was already noted by the 1870s. Extensive shoplifting operations against dry good stores in Cleveland led to arrests of six people, described as a gang of shoplifters from Chicago. A search warrant executed at a house used by the group led to the discovery of hundreds of dollars of goods, including silk handkerchiefs, laces, whole pieces of silk and so forth.

Also by this time false arrest of people were taking place, with a resultant fear on the part of retailers of being sued for damages by wrongfully accused shoppers. A Mrs. David was awarded \$150 in damages in 1878 after being wrongfully accused of shoplifting a purse from a New York store. She was forcibly detained by the store and searched as a result of the accusation. The New York Times editorialized that while a “system of somewhat suspicious watchfulness” was necessary in stores, a little more care could be exercised in selecting store detectives. “Instances of consummate ability on the part of detectives in the higher walks of their profession are sufficiently rare; among the astute persons who dog the steps of suspected visitors in front of shop-counters, hopeless stupidity seems to be disagreeably prevalent. A little more care in the selection of this kind of talent would help greatly to popularize certain stores.”¹⁷

Later that same year Ellen Whalen found herself in court charged with stealing an item of clothing from a dry goods store. Store detective Alexander Sisson testified he saw Whalen take the item from the counter and conceal it under her cloak. He followed her out of the store, brought her back and locked her in the basement of the shop until police arrived. Whalen’s lawyer got Sisson to admit he didn’t know if the item had or had not been sold to the accused. Proof was produced by the defense that Whalen purchased the item whereupon she was discharged.¹⁸

Catherine Walsh, “an elderly respectable-looking woman,” was charged with shoplifting in 1880. A store clerk testified she saw the accused take 85 cents worth of sleeve buttons and hide them in her shawl. Walsh was approached by the clerk’s boss who demanded the buttons’s return. Hotly denying the charge, Walsh nevertheless later gave the buttons back to the clerk saying they must have fallen accidentally into the folds of her shawl. Charged anyway, Walsh was convicted and fined \$25. Noted a reporter, “Although the offense was, in itself, a trivial one, the result of the trial, by reason of the certainty of a suit for damages in the event of an acquittal, was looked forward to with much interest by proprietors of Broadway establishments, many of whom were in court.”¹⁹

The confusion between employee theft and shoplifting happened on occasion. Both contributed to a retailer’s overall loss, known in the trade as . However they were separate issues, although the entire shrinkage figure was often attributed solely to shoplifting—in the old days and in current times. When 18-year-old Lizzie Creamer, an \$8 a week salesclerk employed by dry goods merchant Hartung & Co., was caught stealing items while she was on duty, she was charged and convicted of shoplifting—and sentenced to 60 days in prison. The newspaper report headed the item.²⁰

By the end of the 1870s, shoplifting in Paris was characterized as “very commonplace--- Every week we hear of arrests for petty larcenies , and in many cases the criminals are ladies of family and position.” such American women escaped their predicament by paying for the lifted items and by giving \$100 to the poor. It was said, “Kleptomania seems to be on the increase.” Also arrested was a wealthy German countess: “She confessed that her mania for pocketing small things was so strong that she was unable to resist it, and she offered to pay any sum not to be exposed.” The store owners countered that they had tried the lenient approach for a long and an unsuccessful time and now felt that they had to take a more severe approach. The countess was charged. More generally it was reported that “all the great shops have to employ special detectives, and men are kept watching through holes in the ceiling. Every week several ladies are caught, but thus far a majority have been able to compromise with the proprietor for a large sum of money.”²¹

Shoplifting had become so prevalent by 1878 in New York that the Times did a general round-up article , including interviews with several department store executives, albeit all unnamed. One such retailer mentioned that unfortunately his store sometimes arrested an innocent person by mistake. It was regarded as extremely unpleasant for a businessman to have anyone arrested in his store, even a professional thief. It injured the business in this way: “Respectable ladies, reading in the newspapers of the arrest of shoplifters in stores, sometimes on suspicion, grow nervous over the chance, which is a slim, that they may be mistaken for thieves, and put into the indignity of being taken to a Police station. Many ladies have said to me, ‘Mr. Blank, I am almost afraid to come into your store for fear of being arrested.’” He added that in former times there were no store detectives employed since there were no large establishments. In such establishments the owner and any clerks could see all over the place and they called a police officer when they found anybody stealing. In the large and crowded department stores, already in place in 1878, it was impossible for busy clerks to watch over the store. When this executive talked of gender differences in shoplifting he touched on an obvious point, but one that few others made. “As a very large proportion of our customers are ladies, it would be unfair to say

from the experience of any dry goods or fancy goods house, that women are more apt to steal than men. The people arrested here are all women, of course, but then we have hardly any male customer. Even if we had, there is nothing here that they would care for.”²³

Compare those remarks with the ones from the superintendent of a second department store “...stealing seems to come natural to a great many women.... We sometimes think that some people like to steal where they are closely watched, just to convince themselves of their shrewdness, and gloat over it in private.” From an executive with a third store came the estimate that one woman in nine who entered his store was a professional thief, one in nine was an amateur thief who entered the premises with the fixed idea of taking a particular item, and one in nine came with no fixed intent but spontaneously took something which caught her attention. One large dry goods store was then estimating its annual loss from petty thievery at \$10,000. While kleptomania was catching on as a defense with the accused and with the courts and those in the psychiatric field it never did have much credence with retailing personnel, not with executives, owners, clerks, or store detectives. Said the above-mentioned superintendent, “There may be such a thing as kleptomania, but it is difficult to detect it. It is rather a just criticism that the rich have kleptomania, while the poor are taken down with larceny. I hardly think there is such a disease, but, undoubtedly, there is a mania among some people to steal.”²⁴

Arrests for shoplifting exceeded 4,000 in Paris, France, in 1883. Most of those were described as not belonging to the “needy classes.” Here, a simple bribe was the quickest way out. Noted on account, “As a rule, the shopkeepers hand over the shoplifters to the Commissary of Police, but not infrequently they drop the case on the payment of a heavy fine for the relief of the poor.” For example one wealthy woman who shoplifted 65 francs worth of articles was told she would not be prosecuted if she made a contribution of 1,000 francs to poverty relief.²⁵

By 1883 a reporter noted about shoplifting that: “The evil prevails everywhere in mercantile circles, but it is most oppressingly felt by those firms that conduct the large retail emporiums which are crowded with customers most of the time. Such establishments as occupy whole blocks, or large portions of blocks, and invite a miscellaneous patronage by dealing in a great variety of articles, are the ones that principally suffer from the depredations of shoplifters.” It was then reported that in a dozen of the largest retail stores, owners estimated their annual losses to shoplifting at \$8,000 to \$12,000 each. Kleptomania drew a great amount of space in this report, described as an “evil” familiar to all shopkeepers. Acknowledging that some retailers professed to believe there was such a disorder, the reporter encountered many more whose lips “curled sarcastically” at the mention of the word: “Kleptomania? Oh, you mean the excuse that people of good social standing give when they are caught stealing.” Generally, retailers were said to be averse to taking notice of small thefts by females of wealth and high social standing “and they frequently let them go unpunished rather than stir up the excitement that always follows the accusation of a woman.” Even professional female thieves were said to have no trouble in arousing the sympathies of bystanders whenever they were detected and openly charged with the commission of theft, and whenever a “real lady” was thus accused the feeling which arose against the store owner was intense.²⁶

One owner of a large retail store commented; “The meanest phase of this whole shoplifting business is what you call kleptomania. It is something that we cannot touch without making a

mess of it, and we are compelled to look quietly on from day to day and see ourselves robbed, not only by people of eminent respectability, but by some of our best customers.” He added that he didn’t believe in kleptomania, and of all the shoplifting cases he had dealt with, “I have not seen one which appeared to me to have an innocent or unconscious larceny.” Rather, he felt, American women were gradually acquiring the habit of pilfering and that females of social position did not scruple to steal small things. Like most owners this man didn’t feel like driving a good customer away by proving her to be a thief, unless her stealing amounted to enough to cause the store a serious loss. “And when we are forced to take steps to stop such pilfering we are met by tears and reproaches and the ever-ready excuse of ‘kleptomania,’ with an indignant reminder from the accused person’s relatives and friends of her ‘highly respectable position in society.’” Professional shoplifters had also been in the habit of affecting the when apprehended but since retailers had become so exacting in their demand for Store owners were then in the habit in the case of known shoplifters of reporting their description to other stores. When a different store owner was asked what proportion of shoplifters were female, he replied. Store detectives were sometimes ex-police officers but more frequently there were experience salespeople, usually men. Long service enabled them to become familiar with faces. Among the large retail premises in uptown New York in 1883 it was reported that “there are not more than one in four that employ regular detectives all the time.”²⁷

Macy and Co. had a female store detective, Mary Plunkett, who started work with the retailer in 1879, becoming a store detective in 1888. Seven years later she estimated she had been involved in over 100 shoplifting arrests. She did not believe in kleptomania, stating, “Women I give into custody I class as dishonest.” Explaining Macy’s policy of dealing with people apprehended for shoplifting Plunkett commented: “It is not generally known, perhaps, that in the case of a detected person, who denies, blusters and threatens there is no ‘let-up,’ while in that of a person who at once breaks down, tells her name and address promptly, confesses and exhibits the penitence of a novice, the firm never prosecutes. Such a penitent receives a word of advice or caution, the terms of which admit of no doubt, not to enter the store again, and –freedom. We have quite a number of them.”²⁸

An example of the kind of fuss sometimes created when a women was arrested could be seen in 1905 when store detective John Larkin apprehended a well-dressed, middle-aged woman in a large department store. She responded by “fighting and screaming, trying to jab her hatpin into her captor.” This caused a crowd of patrons in the store to gather “threateningly” around Larkin, as they did not know the woman was under arrest. When he took her outside into the street to be sent to the police station she screamed out noisily with the result that another crowd swarmed around Larkin. While this woman had stolen items worth \$3.50 she had on her person \$400. Larkin said he had arrested the same woman two years earlier on the same charge and that she was released“ after he had been urged to show mercy by a son and daughter, who appeared to be persons of wealth.”²⁹

Some \$500,000 of goods was said to be shoplifted annual from New York stores, in 1906, “by professional shoplifters, professional kleptomaniacs of aristocratic birth, and persons who take things because they are in sore need.” Lawyer Mark Alter, who had defended over 500 people accused of shoplifting (all woman) said that of the 4,000 arrests each year for the offence only about 700 made it into court and of that number not more than 50 were convicted. “Many

women present the plea of an unseen and supernatural force which impels them to steal,” he added. Shoplifters would be taken to an office in the store and questioned closely. If it was decided to release the accused without further prosecution, that person was required to sign an agreement releasing the store from all liabilities from damage suits, a precaution said to be necessary “because of the many persons who from time to time have made a point of appearing guilty without really being so, and when accused, have made trouble for the proprietors.”³⁰

Christmas had become such an active time for shoplifters by the turn of the century that many of the larger retailers employed extra detectives. On one December day in 1907, two detectives employed in one department store arrested six people for the offence, all in separate incidents. One woman explained to her captors: “A woman friend told me to do it. She said that she and her friends took little things in the stores, and never were caught. Besides, she told me that if I were caught I should get only a lecture and a warning.”³¹

That same month on one day in court 30 people appeared on shoplifting charges, all from separate incidents. Most were paroled. However, one was sentenced to 20 days for stealing lace handkerchiefs.³²

So common was the offence that in 1908 Leslie Graff, secretary of the Retail Dry Goods Association of New York City, declared “war” on shoplifters. Having stood the drain as long as they could, this merchants’ trade group announced that every case of shoplifting henceforth detected would be vigorously prosecuted. Every retailer said likely to suffer from shoplifting was represented in the group. Also, the district attorney had agreed to cooperate in obtaining convictions. This may have been one of the first times such a pronouncement was made, but it would not be the last. The declaration that all those apprehended would be prosecuted was never put into practice. Graff explained that the explicit understanding was that when once a case of shoplifting was detected the matter passed completely out of the hands of the owners of the store where the theft took place, and they would have no right to interfere with the prosecution. Supposedly that would end the practice whereby people apprehended in a store pleaded with the proprietor with tears streaming down their cheeks, and often were dealt with leniently. Under Graff’s plan that could not happen as the merchants themselves would be helpless since prosecution passed to the State and to the Retail Dry Goods Association legal staff. As to who was doing the shoplifting Graff said: “The professional shoplifters don’t bother us much... nor is it the poor people who rob the stores, in most cases. Wives of prominent business men, wives of clergy men, well-to-do supposedly respectable women whose husband make from \$5,000 to \$15,000 a year are those who prey upon the stores. They don’t need to take the things: they just take them, and when they are detected and brought before the proprietors of the store they weep and beg for mercy. They say their husbands will leave them if they find it out, and usually the merchants let the matter pass. They will not do so in the future.”³³

At another retailer, a store detective commented that his establishment didn’t fear professional thieves, nor the poor people who stole from need. Rather, “the dangerous ones are the rich and influential women who either yield to a temporary impulse of temptation or are afflicted with a sort of degenerate tendency towards kleptomania. Some of the women that I have caught—and let go often enough—had accounts at the shop and all the money they needed.” The reporter

interviewing the detective went on to describe the scene of customers in a fashionable department store by saying, “It seems impossible that these beautifully gowned, gracefully moving creatures, all polish and delicacy and poise, should harbor among them all one single thief.” He went on to add, “The word seems absurd, an affront to their well-bred faces and their well-filled purses dangling on jeweled chains. And yet it is indeed from this class that the army of shoplifters is largely made-up—this rich, well-mannered, well-nurtured crowd of fair, fine ladies, who order \$200 worth of purchases in a morning with a nonchalant ‘Charge to my account and send to-day.’”³⁴

Methods of shoplifting have changed little in the past hundred years. At the start of the 1900s one method was to try on new clothes, such as coats and dresses, and walk out wearing them, leaving the old, and worthless, behind. Another method was to look at lace items, scarves for example, accumulate a big pile, and then try and secrete one or more items away perhaps in a muff or jacket. One woman had a hollow heel fashioned in her shoes, another had puffs of hair lacquered to extra stiffness, to act as a receptacle for small items. Some women used unbuttoned shirtwaists to stow goods in, or inside low shoes, or up the openings of gloves. Items were also transported in the armpit, the muff, bag, or coat. One woman made off with a \$200 silk gown. She had rolled the gown up and carried it off held between her knees, walking only with the lower part of her legs. At one leading retailer, the detective estimated that, combined, New York City’s leading shops lost \$1 million per year to shoplifting. Yet he still let many of those he apprehended go without further prosecution. Those released had to fill out a form, a sort of confessional, which was then kept in the store’s safe. Usually they were also told to never enter the store again. Regarding the mechanics of the arrest procedure the detective observed, “I always take up the people myself and unless I see them steal, and I see them acting suspiciously later, I let them go. We’d rather lose hundreds of dollars than make one big mistake and expose ourselves to a suit. And we never arrest them in the shop.”³⁵

London, England, was experiencing the same type of problem in its fashionable West End retailing district. Said the manager of a department store located there; “One million dollars a year is the price the merchants have to pay for displaying their goods so attractively... every arrest entails publicity, and no reputable establishment likes to have it become known that it is a frequent prey of the shoplifters. It might keep good customers away. We prefer, if possible, to keep the thieves away. This is comparatively easy with the amateur who is caught committing her first offense. She usually belongs to a respectable family, and readily promises never to enter the store again if she can escape the shame of arrest and trial.” A problem was that the first offender group kept being replenished. Why? This manager commented, “Perhaps, too, the spread of Socialism has something to do with it. People are coming to believe that they have just as much right to the luxuries of life as their more wealthy neighbor and they start out to get them without any misgiving as to the moral aspect of the method.”³⁶

London shop owners had united to fight their own war against shoplifters. Blacklists had been drawn up and circulated to other retailers with all the clerks ordered not to give service to the people on the lists. That was a preventive measure but the real problem lay in suppression of a practice which, noted one account, “when aired in the publicity of a court is certain to cause

business to suffer as it is generally believed that honest customers avoid a shop which is known to take unusual precautions against delinquents and always punishes them when caught.”³⁷

Methods used by English shoplifters included utilizing a bag with a false bottom, a garter with a row of hooks, a hole through a skirt which allowed the passage of goods into a secret pocket in the underskirt, dropping small articles down the back of the neck while ostensibly arranging the hair. A more elaborate method involved placing wax under the edge of a jewelry counter. Then the customer would examine items, discretely sticking an item such as a ring on the wax. Deciding not to buy anything the customer left the store. If apprehended, a search would of course yield nothing. Later a confederate would make a trivial purchase at the counter and retrieve the items. Also utilized were the hollow book, jewelry hidden in the hair and even a secret pocket in the collar of a pet dog. Such animals were taught to out of the shop and go home.³⁷

Not long before World War I began Boston District Attorney Joseph Pelletier declared that shoplifting cost each of the large department stores of that city an average of \$50,000 annually. He recommended that merchants protect their goods with glass cases or wire screens.³⁸