

# COURT INTERPRETER HERE A BOY

## SERBIAN'S 'YES' 20-MINUTE TASK

Police Captain Fiskett Handles Italian Cases and Translates Sometimes for Prisoners He Arrests.



JOHN GONSKA.



CAPT. A. G. FISKETT.

Of all the participants in court procedure, perhaps the least known to the man on the street, is the court interpreter. This, of course, is natural because the interpreter is not called into action very often.

But he plays an important part in the legal drama. In fact only judges and lawyers know how significant a spoke he is in the wheels of justice. And the requirements of a good interpreter are many.

In the first place he must be scrupulously honest. A knavish interpreter can almost make or unmake a case. Secondly, he must be quick and alert. He must have discretion. He must make allowances for the difference in idioms, the peculiar import of various phrases that change or lose strength with translation. He must take all these things into consideration and he must do it quickly. Attorneys do not like to wait—for interpreters.

**D**ULUTH has no official court interpreters. The infrequency of the work would not warrant such a position. But there are certain men who, because of their knack of thorough interpretation, are called upon virtually, all the time.

Police Captain A. G. Fiskett, for instance, does most of the interpreting in Italian cases. At first glance it seems odd that attorneys for the de-

fence would allow a police officer to interpret. But he is known and accepted on his merits.

"Why I've seen that man interpret for a prisoner he himself had arrested and give the fellow the best of the deal," said an attorney yesterday. "He's utterly fair, even when he thinks the prisoner ought to be hanged."

During an Italian manslaughter case the claim of the defense was that the respondent had been grossly insulted by the victim. The defendant was on the stand.

"What did he call you to insult you?" queried the prosecuting attorney.

"He called me a bear," replied the defendant through Captain Fiskett.

"Was that all?" inquired the prosecutor, astonished.

"Just a moment," interposed the captain. "In his language, to call a man a bear is to infer he associates with beasts. It is the greatest possible insult."

That is merely one example.

"Casey," a 15-year-old youth living at New Duluth, is one of the champion interpreters of the city. This lad speaks Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and several of the Hungarian dialects.

"Casey's" tender age is never held against him because he has been tried again and again and all the prominent attorneys know how reliable he is. Casey is not his real name. It is Kosec Cosegovich, but the other is shorter and the young man is no stickler for form.

There is seldom a necessity for interpretive work in Swedish, Norwegian or Danish cases. Most of these peoples are familiar enough with the English language to make themselves understood in a court of law. In Polish cases John Gonska, father of the assistant city attorney, does the bulk of the interpretive work. Jacob Chesson, 409 East Ninth street, takes care of the Russian cases. The Finnish interpretation is looked after, largely, by John W. Juntilla, formerly of the register of deeds' staff, and Frank Peltö of the Pellervo Land & Colonization company.

These men have the respect of bench and bar. They realize and accept the responsibility placed upon them and perform their work conscientiously. It is tedious work too, for the most part and the remuneration is far from princely. From time to time bits of humor creep in as during a Serbian case recently in district court where the witness was asked a question requiring a simple negative or affirmative answer.

The witness and interpreter conversed for 20 minutes. Then the interpreter turned blandly to counsel and declared, "The witness says 'yes'."

"What else did he say?" asked counsel.

"Nothing," replied the interpreter. "He merely said yes."