

Dale Carnegie

5-Minute Biographies

Author of "How to Win Friends and Influence People."



CLARENCE DARROW

A Small-Town Insult Made Him the Greatest Criminal Lawyer of His Time

Nearly three-quarters of a century ago, a school teacher boxed the ears of a little boy because he was restless and fidgety and squirming in his seat. She boxed his ears so that he cried all the way home. He was only five years old at the time, but he felt that he had been treated with cruelty and injustice; he learned to hate cruelty and injustice with a hatred that has kept him fighting all his life.

That boy's name was Clarence Darrow, today probably the best-known criminal lawyer in America—and certainly the greatest criminal lawyer of his time. His name has flashed time and again in bold headlines across every newspaper in the land. He is a crusader, a rebel, a fighter, and a champion of the underdog.

The first case he ever handled is still talked about by the old-timers in Ashtabula, Ohio. The burning issue involved nothing more vital than the ownership of

a second-hand set of harness worth five dollars. But to Clarence Darrow there was a principle at stake. Injustice had raised its snarling head and he fought as he would have fought a Bengal tiger. He was paid only five dollars to fight the case; but he fought it at his own expense, through seven courts for seven years—and won it.

Darrow says he has never been ambitious for money or prestige. He says he has always been a lazy cuss. He started out in life teaching in a country school. One day an incident happened which changed his whole career. There was a blacksmith in town who studied law when he wasn't busy shoeing horses. Clarence Darrow heard this blacksmith argue a law case in the tinsmith's shop. He was fascinated with the wit and eloquence of these country spellbinders. He loved a scrap himself; so he borrowed the blacksmith's law books and began to

study law. On Monday he would take his law books to school, and while his pupils were studying geography or arithmetic he thumbed through the pages of his Blackstone.

He admits he might have remained a country lawyer all his days if something hadn't happened to goad him into action.

He and his wife decided to buy a small house in Ashtabula, Ohio, from a dentist. The price was thirty-five hundred dollars. Darrow drew five hundred dollars out of the bank (and that, by the way, was all he had in the world) and agreed to pay the rest in yearly installments. The deal was almost finished when the dentist's wife refused point blank to sign the papers.

See here, young man," she said scornfully. "I don't believe you'll ever earn thirty-five hundred dollars in all your life."

Darrow was furious. He refused to live in such a town. So he shook the dust of Ashtabula off his feet and headed for Chicago.

His first year in Chicago, he made only three hundred dollars—not even enough to pay his room rent. But the next year he made ten times as much—three thousand dollars—as a special attorney for the city.

"When my luck began to change," Darrow says, "everything seemed rapidly to come my way." Before long he was general attorney for the Chicago and North-western Railway Company and well on his way to a big-money career. Then there was an explosion. A strike. Hatred! Riots! Bloodshed!

Darrow's sympathies were on the side of the strikers. When Eu-

gene Debs, head of the railroad union was called to trial, Darrow threw up his job; and instead of defending the railroads, he defended the strikers. That was the first of Darrow's fiery sensational trials—every one of them a milestone in court room history. Take for example the famous case of Leopold and Loeb, confessed murderers of little Bobby Frank. Public opinion was so shocked, so horrified at the brutality of the crime that when Clarence Darrow undertook the defense of the two murderers, he was reviled and persecuted and called worse than a criminal for daring to defend the guilty boys. And why did he do it? "I went in," Darrow says, "to do what I could against the wave of hatred and malice. No client of mine has ever been put to death and if that should happen I feel it would almost kill me. I have never been able to read the story of an execution. I always left if possible on the day of the hanging. I am strongly against killing."

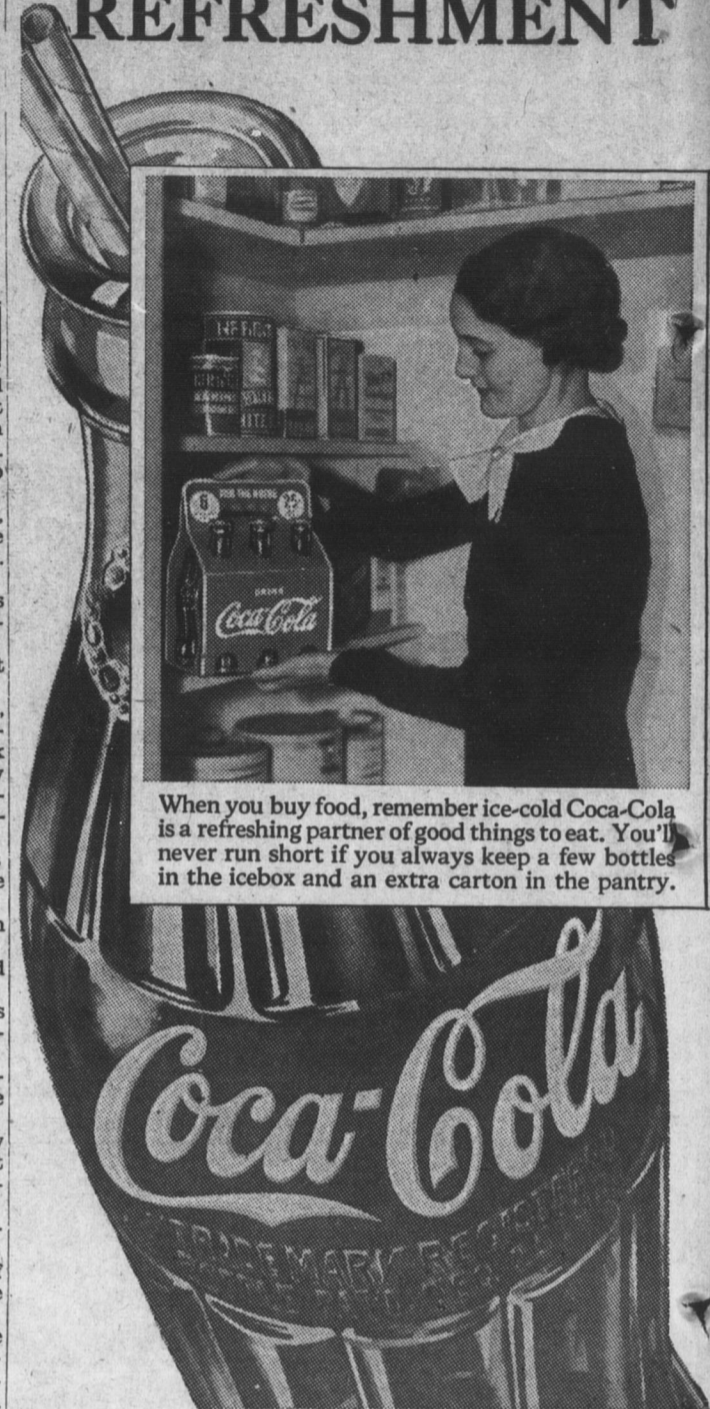
Society makes criminals, he says, and any man might be guilty of any crime.

Darrow himself has known what it is to face trial. He was once accused of bribing a jury, and had to use his powerful eloquence in his own defense. The most touching expression of gratitude he ever experienced was during his own trial. A former client of his met him and said, "Listen, you saved me from the gallows when I was in trouble and now you are in trouble and I'd like to help you out. I'll be glad to kill the chief witness against you and it won't cost you a cent."

A few years ago, Darrow pub-

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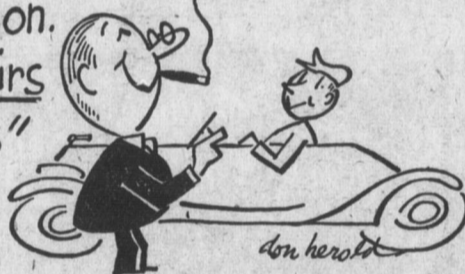
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Good Manners
Aunt: You should always get up from the table hungry.
Nephew: I do better than that; I always leave the table empty.

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