

Criminal Identification by Finger Prints

By James Anderson, Inspector of Detectives — Now Chief Constable, Vancouver.

One of the most important branches of an up-to-date Police Department, and one on which a great deal of responsibility rests, is the Bureau of Criminal Identification, the work entailed being, for the most part, the protection of the public generally against the inroads of crooks of many callings, who eke out a precarious livelihood by preying on the gullibility of unsuspecting citizens.

These crooks rob residences, steal pocket books, forge names on cheques and other documents, and by many unlawful means become a menace to society and the public at large.

Such undesirable members of the underworld are duly tabulated, indexed and filed and all their past operations are recorded.

The work involves notes concerning their characteristics, modus operandi, associates, present location in penal institutions, their re-appearance and activities at their old familiar games, their re-arrest and convictions or dismissals in other cities.

In this age of progress and adaptability, where the hunted, in most cases, have the advantage of the hunter, the most modern methods have to be adopted to cope with the ever increasing cleverness of the crook, and a fresh study is necessary to counteract his ability and vigilance in getting away with his loot and transferring his operations to another district or city, should he be successful in making a rich haul.

The Methods of Former Years.

In former years the police had to depend mostly on meagre descriptions of the culprit, such as his height, color of hair and general appearance, and it is a matter of record that no two men or body of men or women can give the same description of any one person, or agree upon his or her height, probable weight, etc.

As time went on, much progress was made in identification methods. Photos were taken and now form what is known as "The Rogue's Gallery." Those photos have proved a great help in rounding up suspected persons and still form an important adjunct in the identification of criminals.

Photos, however, are oft times misleading, and a change in styles, the addition of whiskers or shaving off a mustache pre-

viously worn, makes photos rather unreliable when depended on entirely.

It was in 1880 that Professor Bertillon, of the Paris Police department introduced his famous antropometric system of identification, by measuring certain parts of the human body, namely height, arms outstretched, trunk, head length, head width, length of right ear, left foot, left little finger and left fore-arm.

The Bertillon system was widely adopted and did considerable service in identification matters, but, owing to the latitude allowed, or rather pursued, by those responsible for the accurate measurement of prisoners, and the complexity of filing, the system has not shown the infallibility claimed for it although many institutions in the United States must of necessity still depend on this old system for old records.

A System That Saves Uncertainty.

All this uncertainty, however, vanished when Sir Edward Henry introduced the present system, the finger print system, and now we have the real, positive and infallible means of identification, for, "The finger print never varies, never can be duplicated."

Every human being on the earth's surface has upon the digits of their own hands ten signatures of their own special identity which can never be forged or duplicated by anyone in the world.

There are no two finger prints alike, even the impressions taken from the different fingers of the same person are vastly different.

If one looks at the under surface of the first joint of his thumb and fingers he will observe a network of hair-like lines, which turn and twist and revolve around, and, when that part of the finger or thumb is brought into contact with ink, blood or any liquid substance, then pressed on paper, certain filigree patterns are produced—every pattern complete in itself and with its own details and characteristics.

There are a great variety of these patterns, and, with the method of classification in use, these are segregated into groups, having numerical values, according to their location on the various digits. These patterns are given names, Arches, Loops, Whorls, Composites and Accidentals, the last

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