

CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION BY FINGER PRINTS.

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Another interesting case was that of three small finger prints left on part of a pane of glass which had been broken in a rear window when a New Westminster store was burglarized and a quantity of goods stolen. The prints were found by a New Westminster officer on his arrival at the scene of the burglary, and fortunately preserved, being later brought to the Vancouver station. On being photographed and enlarged, they were found to be identical with those of a Chinaman who had been previously convicted in Vancouver and whose finger prints were on file here.

The foregoing prints were well defined and the whole case was most interesting in all its details.

The Difficulty—Securing Clear Impressions.

The great difficulty is to secure anything like good, clear prints at the scene of a crime, as the culprit in his hurry to secure his booty and get away, usually smudges any impressions he leaves behind by undue pressure, or sliding movements of his finger tips, which renders the marks often indecipherable, leaving no basis for purposes of comparison or classification.

Where, however, good clear finger prints are discernable to the naked eye, they are a source of extreme satisfaction to the expert, and quite the reverse to the thief, should his prints be on file in the finger print cabinet, for no evidence is quite so conclusive, or so free from any manner of doubt as the testimony presented by two prints made by the same person under different circumstances, and which could have been made by no other person.

Adaptability of the System to Modern Life.

With the adoption of the finger print method and its infallibility as a means of personal identification, its adaptability to many branches of industry and commerce is, in the writer's opinion, only a matter of time.

At present, because the mind of the public is apt to associate finger prints with criminals only, a feeling prevails that to have one's finger prints taken would be nothing short of being disgraced. This feeling would entirely disappear were the benefits derived from such a course realized in the ordinary life and business of the community.

Take, for instance, the matter of forging a name on a cheque. Were you to put your thumb print on a deposit slip when opening your account at your bank, and make a rule to duplicate the same on every cheque you issue or presented for payment, a forgery would be impossible, for, no matter how clever the forgery of the signature, without the finger print impression corresponding to that on the deposit slip the cheque would be worthless.

The same applies to all documents, insurance, wills, contracts, voters' lists, etc.; for who would presume to impersonate a voter at the polling booth if the finger prints of the real voter were in the possession of the returning officer, who could determine in ten seconds whether the would-be voter was the original or not.

Consider how many suicides there are who have been buried at the city's expense, nameless paupers, whose identities could have been established in a short time and sorrowing relatives had at least the sad satisfaction of knowing the worst had their finger prints been on record.

Commendable Action by the U. S.

At the entrance of the United States into the Great War every soldier and sailor was finger-printed and as a result the number of unidentified dead was reduced to almost nil—an outstanding example also being the loss of the "Tuscania"

many of the victims of that disaster being found with absolutely no sign of identification upon their bodies.

Under war department orders finger prints of all these victims were taken and their identity readily established.

In the U. S. during 1918, 40,000 unidentified dead bodies were buried, and during the same period fifty bodies were identified through the finger print method in New York.

Again, finger prints would be invaluable in the case of people suffering from loss of memory, who have forgotten their names, missing persons, children exchanged at birth, the entrance of undesirable immigrants and the like, and, although mostly utilized for the purpose of checking up past records and detection of criminals by the police, they would be equally a safeguard of innocence to those wrongfully suspected of crime.

Signatures can be forged, but the whorls, loops and waves which constitute the impressions of each person's fingers, when inked and transferred to paper, form a number of filigree patterns which cannot be forged by any other person in the world, for upon the fingers of every human in the world, irrespective of race, creed or color, are the indelible signs and signatures of their own identity.

When the Mistake is Yours, Help Correct it

Sometimes as soon as you give the operator a telephone number from memory, you realize you have called the wrong number. The first impulse is to hang up the receiver, but, you should wait and say to the other party, "Beg pardon for calling the wrong number." Then everybody feels all right about it.

If you hang up the receiver without acknowledging your error, the operator gets the blame when she tells the other party that "there's no one on the line."

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