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Police Science Technical Abstracts and Notes

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POLICE SCIENCE TECHNICAL ABSTRACTS AND NOTES

M. Edwin O'Neill

The Florence Reaction for Seminal Stains

An interesting article dealing with the Florence reaction for seminal stains appears in the April-June, 1940 issue of *The Police Journal* (London).¹ The author, Dr. Gilbert Forbes, Police Surgeon of the City of Sheffield, discusses some of the difficulties involved in the application of the test in criminal investigation and reports the results of numerous experiments with the Florence reaction.

With reference to the possible effect of contamination of stains on garments, the author states that the usual materials encountered, such as urine, faeces, pus, blood, vaginal discharge, nasal secretion, and saliva do not give a positive reaction, and, as contaminants, do not interfere with the reaction for spermatic fluid, if

the fabrics are kept dry and the stains are not altered by processes of putrefaction. Other experiments indicated that the amount of choline (the substance responsible for the reaction) varies within rather wide limits in different persons, possibly because of the physiological or pathological conditions existing in the individual at the time. The choline is present in the spermatic fluid rather than in the spermatozoa and a positive reaction might be obtained with specimens in which spermatozoa are absent. On the other hand, spermatic fluid with abundant spermatozoa might give a negative reaction, if the choline content was very low. In the latter case over-dilution of the fluid in the preparation of the extract may cause a negative reaction.

Form Blindness and Proof

In the July-August, 1939, number of the *Journal* there appeared an article on "Form Blindness and Proof" written by Mr. Albert S. Osborn, the eminent document examiner and author of "Questioned Documents," "The Problem of Proof," and "The Mind of the Juror." The article contained two illustrations which were included for the purpose of permitting interested readers to test themselves for possible form blindness. The key to the test appeared in another section of the same issue of the *Journal*. Unfortunately, due to a typographical error an incorrect solution was given in the key with regard to one part of Test C of the first illustration used in Mr. Osborn's article. In order to rectify this mistake, we are reproducing herewith the correct solution, together with the entire illustration originally used in the article. (See Figure 1.)

The following excerpts from a recent communication received from Mr. Osborn give an interesting explanation as to how this mistake was observed and also an

explanation as to why form 6 of Test C should not be considered a square, as was erroneously stated in the key to Mr. Osborn's article:

"This interesting and accurate criticism comes through Julian P. Beek, Esq., Attorney at Law, San Francisco, California, and the error was discovered by Mr. Francis E. Lloyd, an architect of 360 Pine Street, San Francisco, California, who was given the test by Mr. Beek.

"This particular form, it will be seen, stands between Nos. 5 and 7 of the group and is longer up and down than either 5 or 7, and when looked at directly, the length up and down, especially as compared with No. 7, exaggerates the difference between the two forms.

"The fact that No. 6 is longer vertically than either 5 or 7 tends to hide the fact that No. 6 itself is actually longer horizontally than it is vertically and therefore is not a true square. It was not the intention to make this group of three forms deceptive in this way but it just happened.

The Police Journal, 13 (2): 162-172. (1940).

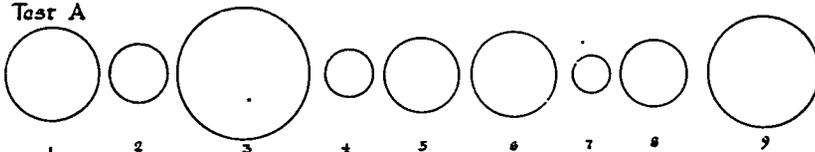
¹ Forbes, Gilbert, "The Scope and Fallacies of the Florence Reaction for Seminal Stains,"

"These eight forms were first drawn in pencil, with approximate accuracy, something more than twice as long and wide as they appear in the reproduction. Then the changes were made before inking the lines. These changes purposely distorted certain of the forms or changed the comparative width and height. No. 5 and No. 7 were both sliced off at the top, and No. 6 was slightly lengthened horizontally. The three forms, 5, 6 and 7, give the misleading impression that No. 6 is a square

form until the paper is turned half way around and the form is looked at so that what is ordinarily horizontal is vertical.

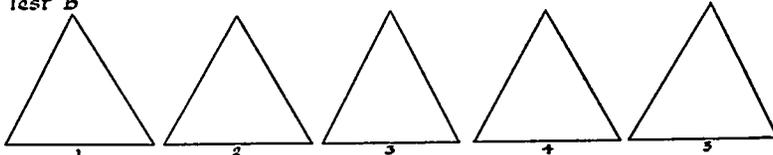
"Measurements show that this particular form, No. 6, is a little more than 2/10 of a millimeter longer horizontally than vertically, or about 125th of an inch. To distinguish this difference in a form placed as this one is placed, between 5 and 7, shows an unusual ability to distinguish and measure form with the eye, and Mr. Lloyd deserves congratulations."

Test A



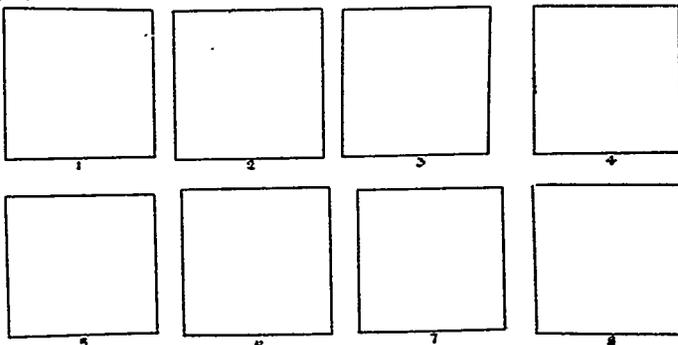
Test A: Size of circles in order.

Test B



Test B: Which are equilateral triangles?

Test C



Test C: Which are squares?

Test D: Arrange numbers of lines in order of curvature.

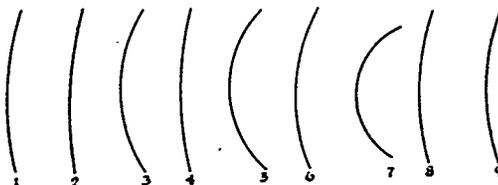
Test E: Arrange numbers of angles in order of width.

No instruments to be used.

SOLUTIONS

Figure 1: (A) 7, 4, 2, 8, 5, 6, 1, 9, 3; (B) 2, 4; (C) 2, 4; (D) 7, 5, 3, 6, 9, 8, 1, 4, 2; (E) 5, 3, 7, 2, 6, 8, 4, 9, 1.

Test D



Test E

