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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by
Paul V. Trovillo

PALM PRINTS: THEIR CLASSIFICATION AND IDENTIFICATION. By *Vaughan Sharp* (Detective Sergeant, South African Criminal Bureau, South African Police, Cape Town.) Mercantile-Atlas Printing Co. [Pty.] Ltd. (Cape Town, South Africa. Title page bears no imprint of publication year, but foreword is dated 1937.) Pp. v + 124, with 105 figures.

On May 9, 1935, Detective Sergeant Sharp presented expert testimony in a hearing of a housebreaking and theft charge, concluded by conviction, in which the Crown case was based largely on palmar impressions found in the entered house (pp. 122-123). At that time, he stated, some 40,000 palm prints had been examined by him. The system which he proposes here is therefore no casual treatment of the problem of classifying palms, and that it is a practical method is indicated in his reports of cases (pp. 99-108) in which even very incomplete chance impressions of palms were quickly identified by search in the files, presumably containing at least some 40,000 prints referred to in the testimony. It is evident also that the usefulness of a file of palmar impressions and of Sharp's system is appreciated by others of the South African police, since official instructions and special forms for these records now are issued (pp. 94-96) apparently as a routine; W. G. Hoal, Attorney-General at Cape Town, moreover, contributes a foreword in which the system is commended as having "already proved itself in practice."

The author points to three major applications of palm-print classifications: (1) identification of palmar impressions left at the scene of crime; (2) registry of newborn infants; (3) as an adjunct to finger-print classification, either simply to admit subdivision of sections such as ten-arches, or as a complete supplement with each person registered by both finger-prints and palm-prints.

Necessarily adapted to the features peculiar to the palm, Sharp's scheme still follows closely the basic principles which are familiar in finger-print classifications and formulation. In the scope of a review it is impossible to outline the details of the whole method. The *Primary* classification makes use of the variable configurations of the thenar eminence (called "freak area") and the hypothenar eminence ("percussion area"), as well as varying levels of the delta which lies between these eminences. For each hand there are six main divisions of the primary class, and these divide into twenty-three groups, making a total of forty-six primaries. The *Secondary* classification is concerned with the configurations of the interdigital areas. *Sub-secondary*, *Sub-final* and *Final* classes are determined by ridge counts. An extension of the ZIMOX finger-print counts code of the South African Criminal Bureau, carried to 46 ridges and over, is presented in the key word ZIMOX-PALNES. Though it is stated (p. 6) that "a very even dispersal of prints throughout" is obtained under this classification many readers would be interested in a statistical summary in evidence, if "throughout" is to be interpreted as meaning that an even distribution is attained under all divisions of every class.

The generous illustration of the book is an appreciated aid in following the text descriptions of configurational types, especially since the nomenclature of some of these types is unfortunately chosen. In the "percussion area" (hypothenar region), for example, a loop having its closed head facing radially and the open extremity directed ulnarwards is an "inward loop"; the converse is an "outward loop." On the hand the terms "outer" and "inner" are notoriously open to misunderstanding, and they should be avoided. His "outward loop" of the hypothenar *opens radially*, and the "inward loop" *opens ulnarwards*; they should be so described and named in

conformity to finger-print description, which is the common practice among workers with palm-prints. The same general criticism applies to the terminology of patterns in other regions, in that loops are not designated according to the directions of their open extremities. In some instances the confusion is rendered greater by the use of finger-print terms in strange senses, as exemplified in this characterization of one of the seven pattern types of the thenar region ("freak area"): "Ulnars are loop formations which *slant* from the Index-Thumb interdigital space towards the Ulnar bone. *The recurve* [head of the loop] *may be either pointing away from or towards the ulnar bone.*"

On page 122, as a part of the testimony previously mentioned, Sharp points out that while the South African police had recognized the value of palm-prints for years, only finger-prints had been used in the filing of criminal records. He explains this in part in the assertion "that until 1931 [when his method was completed] no classification of palm-prints had been evolved." This is in error, for long before that date the investigations of Stockis, of Oloriz and of Wilder and Wentworth were available. Since 1931, but before the publication of Sharp's book, three additional schemes had been proposed: Beletti (1934), Lecha-Marzo (1934) and Pond (1936). The status of the field is recalled for two purposes. One is to give emphasis to the fact that Sharp's contribution, made quite independently, is probably the best and most practicable of its kind. The second purpose is to draw attention to a regrettable lack of scientific method, the failure to survey the results of past work, testing for weak points and combining the good into a composite, for increased stability and as insurance against the chaos of multiplied methods. The history of finger-print classifications should stand as a warning, if we are to expect anything approaching the ideal of a universally acceptable system.

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HOW CRIMINALS ARE CAUGHT. By *Arnold Miles* (Assistant Director, American Municipal Association, Chicago). The Macmillan Co. (New York, 1939). Pp. 123. \$.60.

The war on crime is waged under numerous handicaps. One such handicap is that those who should serve as allies frequently do not work together. The natural allies in the war on crime are the peace officer and the law-abiding citizen. The officer understands the need for this alliance well enough; frequently the citizen does not. The lack of this understanding on the part of the latter is due in large measure to his ignorance of the problems of law enforcement. If the average citizen, interested in the maintenance of law and order, could be fully acquainted with the problems of the peace officer, this particular handicap would be overcome to a large extent, if not entirely. Because of this fact, any book designed to acquaint the layman with an important part of this field should be welcomed as a contribution to the general security of the community.

How Criminals Are Caught, by Arnold Miles, one of a series known as "the people's library," is such a volume. The author has made use of typical cases to make clear to the layman the actual work of the policeman. "One June day in 1938 two kidnapers"—so starts the second chapter entitled "Catching Them on the Run." Then follows a true story taken directly from police annals, except that the names are changed. The story itself is boiled down to less than a page and a half and is followed by several pages of discussion of the basic problem. This gives a general idea of the plan of the volume except that it does not disclose the full technique employed in most of the chapters. The third chapter, entitled "Police and Witness Talk Together," is more typical in this respect. Nearly three pages of introduction to the subject are encountered before the sentence: "The Wilton bank robbery was solved because a witness was not afraid to contradict previous testimony." This prefaces a brief statement of the actual case, which is fol-

lowed by nearly three pages of discussion, not of the case but of the general problem.

The author explains to the reader not only how the officer proceeds in his effort to apprehend offenders, but how the citizen may aid the officer to best advantage. He also includes suggestions for the benefit of the reader himself, one of the longest chapters being devoted to the subject, "how to protect yourself against theft." While intended for, and no doubt of most importance to, the private citizen, this volume should prove interesting reading even to the police officer.

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MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE AND TOXICOLOGY (Sixth Edition). Edited by *John Glaister*, M.D., D.Sc. (Barrister-at-Law, Regius Professor Forensic Medicine, University of Glasgow; formerly Professor of Forensic Medicine, University of Egypt, Cairo; and Medico-legal Consultant to the Egyptian Government). William Wood and Co. (Baltimore, 1938). 107 Illustrations and 8 Plates. Pp. xiii, 747. \$7.50.

This book in its sixth edition is edited by the son of the author of the previous editions. The Glaisters, father and son, have established for themselves a place in the field of Medical Jurisprudence that is eminent and authoritative.

The work is divided into two sections, the first of which is on Medical Jurisprudence and the second on Toxicology.

Under the subject of Medical Jurisprudence, which embraces approximately two-thirds of the volume, the author in sixteen chapters discusses the various aspects of the usual types of violent deaths. In addition, a large part of the text is given up to a discussion of the laws of England and Scotland relating to these subjects. While it is true that science is universal in its application, the various laws and statutes governing this applica-

tion are entirely local, so that for many people this part of the book is of little or no value. For instance, in Chicago or in Paris it is not of particular advantage to know that "the law of Scotland holds that a dying deposition or a dying declaration of a person who is dead is admissible as evidence whether that person were the party injured or not, if in life he would have been a competent witness." Consequently all of the voluminous material dealing with Criminal Procedure in England and Scotland, the Venereal Disease Act of 1917, Workmen Compensation Acts, Schedule of Industrial Diseases and all of the other matters of law are of particular interest only to those affected.

That part of the book dealing with Forensic Medicine has been changed but little from previous editions except for a few sections which have been radically revised or are entirely new, such as blood stains, finger prints, and the famous Ruxton case. Most of the references in the footnotes are to articles and data which appeared from thirty to fifty years ago. While some of the case histories which were so voluminous (even in small type) in the previous edition have been omitted from this volume, there is still far too much of that material. Some of these case histories take up two or three pages, and if only a few cases such as the Ruxton murder (in the solution of which the editor played a prominent part) were employed with the others deleted, this, in the opinion of this reviewer, would be a distinct improvement. The scientific part of this section covers the field and is well written, the chief criticism being the surplusage.

The second section takes up the subject of Poisons and includes a new chapter on War Gases. In this section there is very little of the extraneous material which so hampers the usefulness of the first section. The subject has been treated in a comprehensive yet concise manner, making the work very satisfactory for its reference value.

Although the illustrations leave much to be desired in both quantity and quality, the sixth edition has been improved measurably by a new index.

In conclusion, it may be said that this is an authoritative work which has stood the test of the years. A student of Forensic Medicine will find considerable material in this edition not appearing in other works. In spite of its shortcomings for a person not a subject of Great Britain, it nevertheless is a valuable addition to any medicolegal library.

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CLINICAL TOXICOLOGY. By *Clinton H. Thienes* (Head of Dept. of Pharmacology, School of Medicine, University of Southern California, Los Angeles). Lea & Febiger (Philadelphia, 1940). Pp. 309. \$3.50.

Although Dr. Thienes has stated in his preface that this book is written primarily as a classroom text and as a guide for the general practitioner, it may be useful for reference purposes to many readers of this Journal. Its arrangement undoubtedly will meet with favor among a large number of teachers, as well as those who use the book for general purposes. As a matter of fact, the grouping and arrangement of the poisons in the order of their major toxic action are, for most purposes, excellent and very practical. For example, there are nine sections and an appendix. The subjects of these sections are as follows: Convulsant Poisons; Central Nervous System Depressants; Peripherally Acting Nerve Poisons; Poisons Acting on Nerve Trunks, Ganglia and Nerve Endings; Muscle Poisons; Protoplasmic Poisons; Poisons of the Blood and Hematopoietic Organs; Principles of Treatment; An Outline of Symptom Diagnosis; Chemical Diagnosis of Poisoning. The Appendix deals with Special Reagents.

The author has gathered together from many sources much useful and important information which is generally available only in the more advanced and more specialized treatises in the field of toxicology and pharmacology. The sub headings under the principal topic in each case are also well arranged for teaching purposes and general practical use. Because of the fact that the textbook is written

solely from the toxicological standpoint and any detailed description of chemistry, pharmacy or general pharmacology is omitted, it must presuppose some general knowledge of these subjects since it is impossible to understand toxicology without such information.

Although it is generally recognized that an extensive bibliography is not practical in small textbooks, it seems that in this instance reference to more complete and extensive works is probably too limited. It is conceded without question that the author of any such compilation as this cannot possibly have read all the literature concerning each subject mentioned and included, and therefore he must accept statements of other authors who have had access to the more extensive literature. It is inevitable that some of the statements made by such authorities are opinion evidence based on a broad survey of a very complicated and scientific literature concerning the particular topic discussed. For example, it is not expected that Dr. Thienes would have read the 10,000 or more references on lead and about an equal number on arsenic, so that some of the statements made concerning these substances must of necessity have been taken from authorities who supposedly have read most of the literature. This is in no sense a criticism of Dr. Thienes because it is an error which all of us commit. There is a statement, for example, on page 163: "Some of the inhabitants of Styria and Tyrol eat as much as a gram of white arsenic daily without apparent harm." It is quite certain, if Dr. Thienes had read the original papers on which this evidence is based, that he would feel that he could not make this unqualified statement. A similar statement concerning lead is made on page 98: "However, as little as 2 milligrams daily, ingested over a period of weeks will lead to chronic lead poisoning." That is probably true in many cases, but one wonders if the evidence is sufficient to indicate that it will occur in all cases as this sentence would lead one to believe.

On the whole the text is an excellent one and should be well recommended.

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