

1950

Police Science Book Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Police Science Book Reviews, 41 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 120 (1950-1951)

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by
Ralph F. Turner*

AN INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINALISTICS (The Application of the Physical Sciences to the Detection of Crime). By Charles E. O'Hara and James W. Osterburg. Macmillan, New York, 1949. Pp. xxii, 705. \$10.00.

In offering this book, the primary intent of the authors is to provide a training manual "to make a detective out of a science student" (p. x). They point out that, of the numerous published works dealing with scientific criminal investigation by laboratory methods, most aim to do the reverse, i.e., to make a scientist out of a detective. The latter approach, they feel, is less likely to succeed.

In compiling their material, the writers observe that the field of laboratory techniques applicable to the investigation of crime is entirely too broad to be covered adequately within the space of a single volume. For this reason, they have purposely omitted certain fields which are already covered by a number of texts—subjects such as toxicology, handwriting comparison, firearms identification, and lie detection.

One of the problems which confronted the authors was the finding of a suitable name to apply to the heterogeneous body of laboratory procedures employed in police work. The terms *police science* and *scientific criminal investigation* were thought to be equally applicable to police administration, while *forensic chemistry* or *forensic science* were said to express too little to be useful. So they adopted the term *criminalistics* as referring to the work of the police laboratory. In justifying their selection, they point to similar European terms, such as *Kriminalistik*, *criminalistique* and *criminalistica*. To this reviewer, their arguments in favor of the newly-coined name seem somewhat specious. That the authors themselves are not fully converted is apparent from their frequent reversion to the term "forensic scientist" (p. xii) or "police scientist" (p. 68) in place of "criminalistician" (p. 21) for designating police laboratory scientists. In making objective tests of persons (particularly motorists) who are thought to be under the influence of intoxicating liquor, it is customary to ask them to pronounce certain difficult words—such as "Methodist Episcopal"—in order to reveal any slurring of speech. Possibly "criminalistician" would be a useful word to add to such a list.

Not only is the book intended for the training of scientists in the techniques of catching law-breakers, but it is pointed out that detectives, patrolmen, and private investigators will also find guidance in many sections of the book. The authors apparently feel that their book will become the "yardstick" by which the value of criminalistic evidence will be measured, for they state (p. xi): "It is hoped that jurists and lawyers will find the work useful in judging the worth and reliability of expert testimony in courts."

The authors admit (and there can be little dissent!) that the problem of the treatment of the book's subject matter is not an easy one, for it necessitates the inclusion of matters which are of high-school simplicity, but also extends to problems of the graduate-school level of difficulty. Thus, we find a whole chapter devoted to density determinations—which largely duplicates laboratory exercises in a high-school physics course. On the other hand, one finds a discussion of the calculus involved in the development of the Gaussian theory of errors (page 49).

Within a space of about 700 pages, the authors have brought together material on many subjects, gathered from a wide variety of sources. Most frequently,

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techniques originally published in this Journal are reported. One finds a multiplicity of references to many other sources, ranging from Archiv für Kriminologie and the Police Journal (London) to the F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin and various trade catalogs.

The book is divided into ten parts under the following classifications:

- A. "The Laboratory in General" (pp. 3-36) in which the requirements for a police laboratory and mobile unit are outlined, both as to equipment and trained personnel. Also discussed are general problems concerning the collection of evidence at the scene of a crime and its preservation for laboratory examination or court presentation.
- B. "Physical Measurements" (pp. 39-74). A rather elementary treatment of the subject.
- C. "Impressions" (pp. 75-139) including fingerprints, footprints, tire impressions, moulage techniques, and tool marks.
- D. "Photography and the Crime Laboratory" (pp. 141-235). An excellent discussion of both theoretical considerations and practical photography of evidence or crime scenes.
- E. "Physical Examinations" (pp. 239-346). A discussion of glass fractures, gambling devices, X-ray techniques, and ultra-violet and infra-red light in police investigations. This section contains three excellent chapters bearing upon the investigation of automobile accidents.
- F. "Chemical Examinations" (pp. 349-453) reports the techniques involved in the chemical tests for intoxication, analysis of liquor, detection of gunpowder residues, carbon monoxide, blood (including determination of species origin and blood group), seminal stains and narcotics. The use of detective dyes is discussed.
- G. "Document Examination" (pp. 457-517) outlines the methods for identifying inks (including invisible writings) and erasures. Methods for the restoration of writing on scorched or charred documents are given.
- H. "Optical Methods of Analysis" (pp. 521-603) points out the proper use of the microscope, the photomicrographic camera, the refractometer, and the spectrograph in criminal investigative work.
- I. "Advanced Instrumental Methods of Analysis" (pp. 607-654) explains newer techniques such as X-ray diffraction, color analysis by means of the spectrophotometer, and the projected use of the electron microscope in police work.
- J. "Science and the Probative Value of Physical Evidence" (pp. 657-696).

It would probably be exceedingly difficult to obtain general agreement as to just what techniques should be included in such a volume and which ones should be left out. If their problem is to train a scientist to be a police investigator, much of the elementary material in the book could well have been eliminated. It seems that if, as the authors stated, toxicology were to be omitted from the book, they could well have dispensed with the discussion of such poisons as carbon monoxide and the opiates. On the other hand, some material could have been included on laboratory methods of handling arson cases, examination of hairs and fibers, sabotage in general, and the illegal use of bombs and explosives. However, these criticisms are of minor importance. Workers in this field can be grateful to these authors for having gathered together within the covers of a single volume, innumerable techniques that one finds scattered throughout the American and European literature and which have been tested in the police laboratory of our nation's largest city.

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Michigan Department of Health

C. W. MUEHLBERGER

POLICE SYSTEMS IN THE UNITED STATES. By *Bruce Smith*, 2nd edition. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1949. Pp. 351. \$5.00.

In *Police Systems in the United States*, Bruce Smith gives us a full and complete view of our police systems, how they work, their failings, and constructive suggestions for their improvement. The book contains ten chapters covering all phases of police administration and is a revised and enlarged edition of one published in 1940 except for an added chapter on Traffic Control. Smith paints a vivid picture in a list of tables covering such matters as:

- (1) Entrance and Maximum Salaries for Patrolmen, 1948.
- (2) Per Cent Distribution of Police Employees by Type of Police Activity.
- (3) Ratios of Officers to Patrolmen.
- (4) Non-Police Employees.
- (5) Distribution of Major Police Equipment in Six Groups of Cities.
- (6) A Classification of Major Police Activities.
- (7) Distribution of the Major Common Law Enforcement Agencies.

Throughout you read with interest of the steady advance of police standards. There is also a series of fourteen charts and graphs having to do with such subjects as monthly distribution of crime, crime by hours, distribution of police, police organization, one on each for Chicago and Wichita police organizations, etc. Smith opens chapter one with this paragraph: "The police problem in America is as old as our system of local government. Springing from the creation of the first police establishments on these shores, it has continued to grow in complexity with the passing years. It is still a prominent feature of the American scene largely because of errors of long standing in the organization and management of police, and in the methods employed to assure popular control." Chapter after chapter he points to these errors and suggests methods for their correction.

It is interesting to note that he dwells at length on the problems that vex most police departments: Poor press and public relations, politics, and the failure of some departments to stress the most important police duties—protection of life and property. About those who attack the police he says: "From the earliest days of modern police forces, and down through the five score years that have followed, police have been the object of attack by press and pulpit, bench and bar, civic and commercial association, labor leaders, professional politicians, ambitious office seekers, reformers, and criminals. With so many social elements joining in the attack, the charges have naturally ranged between some rather wide extremes. Police have been denounced as relentless man hunters, as oppressors of the weak and helpless, and as the tools of sinister influences and interests. They have also been described as largely ineffective agencies, which fail to realize their objectives and in any case cost too much." In spite of all this Smith looks towards a bright future when he says: "Even though there is no royal road to police perfection, the way to improvement is not barred by hopeless obstacles that are inherent in the police function."

He makes one interesting statement which falls in line with what Mayor O'Dwyer has intimated lately in the press: "In city after city and in state after state, it is literally true that the general public does not want law enforcement in the strict sense of the term." About the press, he says: "Those who determine editorial policies themselves have been mislead occasionally into condemning the police when they were right and praising them when they were wrong. Police administration reacts strongly to such confusing counsels."

It is significant to note that the Chicago Civil Service Commission has seen fit to recommend this book as required reading for those taking tests for advancement on the Chicago Police Department. It would be well for other cities to follow their example. The author, Bruce Smith, is America's leading authority on police admin-

istration. He has contributed much to the cause of better policing, and the present edition of his earlier work adds to the luster of his already illustrious career in the field.

Captain
Chicago Police Department.

JOHN I. HOWE

FORENSIC MEDICINE. By *Douglas J. A. Kerr, M.D.* Fourth Edition. Adam and Charles Black, London, Macmillan, New York, 1946. Pp. 359.

"Forensic Medicine or Medical Jurisprudence may be defined as the application of medicine to the purposes of the law and the administration of justice. As such it plays an important part in guarding the safety of each individual in the community, and also in ensuring that any accused person is not unjustly condemned." These are the introductory sentences to the fourth edition of an excellent textbook of legal medicine. This edition has been enlarged and improved, and its material includes all aspects of medicolegal investigation of deaths in the interests of public safety, as well as information on toxicology and the legal aspects of mental disorders.

The book is succinctly written and contains factual material relating to practically any problem that may confront coroners, medical examiners, or forensic pathologists. It does not purport to describe procedures in detail, but a few useful simple ones are given consideration.

The first two chapters are devoted to a discussion of medicolegal problems as related to customs and laws of the United Kingdom, and as such they are not directly concerned with procedures in the United States. However, the principles expressed and the historical and philosophical comments concerning medicolegal procedure and practice are worthy of perusal by anyone interested in legal medicine.

The section on the examination of blood has been enlarged, and the latest information relating to paternity exclusion on the basis of blood grouping is concisely presented. In the new section on head injuries, there is a description of the more common types of structural damage; this is correlated with a consideration of the mechanical factors that result in such damage. The effects of injuries of the head on the senses and judgment of the victim are also described. The entire section on head injuries is subject only to the comment that brevity of presentation has not precluded inclusion of the more important facts relating to trauma of the head.

Two of the three chapters devoted to the psychiatric aspects of legal medicine deal with a description of insanity and mental deficiency and with the relationship of mental abnormality to criminal responsibility. McNaughten's Rule, which interprets the legal status of criminal responsibility in cases where it appears that an abnormal state of the mind of the accused may tend to modify that responsibility, is presented, and its historical background is discussed in some detail. In this regard, there appears to be an anachronism: The legal test applied to a plea of insanity is one that dates from 1843; practical psychiatry was unknown at the time of *Rex vs. McNaughten*, and it is apparent to many persons who are interested in forensic medicine that modernization of this judicial rule is long overdue. The third of the chapters on insanity consists mostly of English and Scotch law relating to commitment and testamentary capacity, facts that are little applicable to problems of insanity in the United States.

Sexual offenses are dealt with in a chapter that is well worth reading by anyone whose duties require investigation of these cases. In addition, a portion of the chapter on criminal responsibility is devoted to sexual offenders, and the progressive point of view outlined by Doctor Kerr is one that deserves consideration in the handling of persons accused of crimes in which sex is a factor.

The compact nature of the book without omission of important principles, the