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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by
Ralph F. Turner*

THE IDENTIFICATION OF FIREARMS AND FORENSIC BALLISTICS. By *Major Sir Gerald Burrard, Bt., P.S.O., R.F.A., (Ret.)*, Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London, 1951. Pp. 217. \$6.00.

This book written in a combination of first and third person consists of an interesting narrative discussion of the problems involved in firearms identification as practiced in the profession of criminalistics. The author's purpose was to convey to the reader only the fundamental principles of firearms, their operation and functioning, and the methods and bases of laboratory investigation of problems arising in connection with firearms. There are five line drawings and forty-one plates which are first quality material, yet the text seems to be under-illustrated, and the plates are not arranged to accompany references to them in an adjacent manner.

It is unfortunate that the title contains the word "Ballistics." With the exception of powder pressure measurement the subject matter is remote from the field of ballistics. The author no doubt was compelled by the precedent of previous misuse of the words "forensic" and "ballistics" to use these connotations even though the current trend in police science vernacular is to avoid these terms.

The text is highly accurate in principle and in details discussed, and the approach to bullet and cartridge case identification via the route of what happens during the cycle of firing of a round of ammunition is particularly commendable.

Each phase of the book is capable of much greater amplification as to detail, tables of data, etc. The author could have expanded his theme into a comprehensive treatise had he used tables of data, bibliography, and references of which there are practically none in this book. Only one specialized comparison microscope is discussed, and the reader obtains no idea of what general types of techniques and comparison instruments are available and in use and their relative merit.

During preliminary investigation the problem of determining the make of firearm from a cartridge case and/or a bullet left at a crime scene is played down by the author as being of little value. This is contrary to the experience of some law enforcement agencies in the U.S.A. The only glaring error found by this reviewer is the use of the term "pump gun" as meaning automatic shotgun whereas it actually refers to a repeater, manually operated by a sliding forearm. The text at one point is confusing in respect to the meaning of microscope tube length. Omitted are several other aspects of firearms identification such as a methodical outline of an investigator's responsibilities in respect to questions of physical evidence which should be resolved at the scene of a shooting; accounting for the pathway of each fired bullet to its termination point; relationship to medico-legal examinations; material occluded with or adhering to bullets; testing for powder burns; serial number restoration; and the importance of functioning tests.

In spite of the defects mentioned, the book is a welcome contribution to a field which is particularly barren of published material. The lawyer will

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find it instructive and interesting; it should be required reading for every police officer trainee; and the laboratory technician will find it worth perusing even though it fails to fill the need for a complete treatise.

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LOWELL W. BRADFORD

THE SCALPEL OF SCOTLAND YARD. By *D. G. Browne* and *E. V. Tullett*, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. 1952. Pp. 503. \$5.00.

Sherlock Holmes may still typify English criminal investigation to many people, but the life and exploits of Sir Bernard Spilsbury, from 1905 to 1947 a practicing pathologist, prove once more that truth can be as strange as fiction—and that in the hands of competent biographers the triumphs of science can come as alive and as thrilling as the most action-crowded detective novel. Let the Baker Street Irregulars bow to a new and a real hero in the war against crime.

This reviewer first met Bernard Spilsbury at University College in 1943 and somewhat later, just after his son's death, at a London club. Unfortunately there was no opportunity to observe one of his matchless performances on the witness stand—nor to attend one of his even more outstanding post-mortems. Dr. Spilsbury was old and tired and ill—but friendly, humorous, and eager for comments on expert testimony before American criminal courts, the mobile crime laboratory which the CID had introduced in Europe, and the details of several murders involving military personnel on the Continent.

To Browne and Tullett, Spilsbury is a hero but a hero with enough human frailties, or even eccentricities, to make him not only real but likable. He resented contradiction in professional matters; his sense of humor was on the gruesome side (he once carried home part of a human leg and left it in the kitchen for his cook to discover); he was vindictive (and so are Browne and Tullett) toward his rival, Dr. Robert Bronté; though charming and polite, he held himself aloof; and some lawyers and doctors attributed to him a belief in his own infallibility not entirely consistent with personal or professional modesty.

Faults or no, from his first post-mortem in January 1905 to his last, the corpse of the murdered Alec de Antiquis, he performed more than 25,000 autopsies and figured in virtually every famous British criminal trial for four decades. Among his more interesting cases, vividly recounted by Browne and Tullett, were those of Vivian Messiter, found dead in a pad-locked room; of Elsie Cameron, whose murderer faked a suicide setting; of Percy Thompson, stabbed by his wife and her lover; of Fred Cummins, "the Ripper"; of Jean-Pierre Vaquier, the poisoner; of John Donald Merrett, the matricide; and of countless other victims or dealers of death. Nor are these cases presented in slap-dash fashion. In each the circumstances of the murder are clearly and concisely set forth—the scientific inquiry detailed—and the presentation of the evidence in court with its effect on the verdict analytically noted. *The Scalpel of Scotland Yard* is not a text-book for the investigator—but even the most expert in that field (and the lawyer and judge handling homicide cases) can read it with almost as great profit as pleasure.

Bernard Henry Spilsbury passed away on December 17, 1947, in the laboratory of University College. His is already a legendary name in the annals of medical jurisprudence. "He found (*pathology*) still an empirical science, and left it a precise one, and forensically . . . he raised the giving

of professional medical evidence from a suspect and controversial status to an honorable and exact plane."

New York University

DONAL E. J. MACNAMARA

SCIENTIFIC AND LABORATORY METHODS OF JUDICIAL PROOF. The Bureau of Government Univ. of Wisconsin, Extension Division, Madison, Wisconsin, 1951. Pp. 236 plus illustrations. \$4.00.

During the period October 31-November 2, 1951, the Bureau of Government of the University of Wisconsin presented an Institute on Scientific and Laboratory Methods of Judicial proof. Mr. Charles M. Wilson, Director of the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory, and his associates prepared an extensive manual for use by those attending the Institute. This manual has been reprinted and is now available in the form of a mimeographed publication. While the initial purpose of the manual was to serve as a syllabus for students in the Institute, through careful arrangement of subject matter and choice of illustrations, charts, etc., the material has developed into a most excellent report on the activities of a progressive scientific crime detection laboratory.

There are numerous publications available outlining the potential use of a laboratory and simple explanations relative to the collection and preservation of evidence designed for the criminal investigator. However, this reviewer is singularly impressed with the thoroughness of the coverage presented in the manual. The manual is not designed primarily for a technician working in the laboratory, but rather without becoming unduly technical, it explains in minute detail what the laboratory technician is able to do if physical evidence has been handled in the proper and accepted manner.

As a result of this complete coverage, well fortified with photographs and diagrams, it is also possible to use the manual as a guide for the establishment of a police science laboratory. Certain portions of the material are also applicable to the preparation of lectures on the collection and preservation of physical evidence for use in police recruit schools.

The manual is divided into three parts. Part I contains a brief description of the operating mechanics, report forms, etc. of the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory and the services offered by its Field Unit. Part II, the most exhaustive section of the manual, contains detailed instructions and descriptions of scientific work relative to such matters as the collection and preservation of evidence, pathological and toxicological investigations, photography, investigation of hit-and-run cases, investigation of fire arms cases, comparative micrography, collection of standards for comparison in questioned document examinations, fingerprints, lie detection work plus several additional scientific techniques and procedures. Part III is devoted exclusively to scientific tests for alcohol intoxication including papers by Dr. Frank Kozelka, Dr. R. N. Harger, and Professor J. R. Dewitt.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of this highly practical manual as a contribution to the literature in police science. It is bound in loose-leaf form, and lends itself to the addition of new material as it is prepared.

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RALPH F. TURNER

PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES Vol. 1, No. 1. Edited by Frank R. Dutra and Ralph F. Turner. Department of Police Administration, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan, 1952. Pp. 416. \$8.00.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences is a new organization of persons interested and engaged in forensic science. At the first American Medico-legal Congress held in St. Louis January 19-21, 1948, a steering committee was appointed, and formulated organizational plans for the Academy. The steering committee recommended the name "American Academy of Forensic Sciences."

The first regular meeting of the Academy was held in Chicago during January, 1950. The next regular meeting was held in Chicago during March of 1951, and it is the *Proceedings* of this 1951 meeting that have been published. This is the first publication of the Academy proceedings, and in addition to the verbatim reporting of the various lectures, there is included programs of the previous meetings. These programs enumerate the various topics discussed so that if a reader's interest is aroused it might be possible for him to secure copies of the lecture by direct contact with the respective lecturer.

The subjects taken under discussion in the 1951 *Proceedings* are of such variety that even the highly specialized expert will find something of interest to him. The general reader will find all of the topics of great scientific value. The subjects vary from "Sudden Death During Sexual Intercourse" to "Experience with Alcoholics Anonymous." Toxicology, lie detection, document examination, psychiatry, and pathology are all included in the scientific discussions. Anyone interested in scientific criminal investigation and forensic science will be vitally interested in the reports of the 1951 *Proceedings*.

The country's foremost experts who comprise the membership of the Academy, have made valuable contributions to the profession of forensic science, and we look forward to the publication of the *Proceedings* of the 1952 meeting which was held at Atlanta, Georgia.

State Police Scientific Laboratory
Albany, New York

WILLIAM E. KIRWAN

HANDWRITING, A PERSONALITY PROJECTION. By *Frank Victor, Ph. D.*
Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1952. Pp. 149. \$3.75.

The art of questioned document examination has become well established in the field of police science and with continued improvement in the techniques of scientific examination of questioned specimens of handwriting and typewriting, the document examiner is able to offer sound, important and valuable opinions in the investigation of criminal cases or the establishment of facts in certain other types of disputes. Along with these developments and the establishment of certain professional levels of ability and ethical conduct, there has appeared a clear-cut line of demarcation between the science of questioned document examination and the popular interpretation of personality analysis, graphology, etc. through the medium of handwriting examination. The latter has found little acceptance in scientific, professional, and legal circles.

The psychologist has been interested in the exploration of various methods for gaining insight into the character and personality of the individual, i.e., projection studies, Rorschach tests, analysis of drawings, paintings, etc. These investigations have progressed in a scientific and well ordered manner under the direction of competent people with adequate training in this area.

The above title presents the results of this sort of work with particular emphasis on an examination of handwriting in an attempt to gain insight into the personality of the writer. While this book is of primary interest to the clinical psychologist, the professional document examiner may want