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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by

Richard L. Holcomb*

JUVENILE OFFICER. By *Captain Harold L. Stallings* with *David Dressler*. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1954. Pp. viii + 247. \$3.00.

When Harold L. Stallings entered the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 1938, he was 26 years old. "He had been," as he stated, "a soda jerk, haberdashery clerk, and flour salesman, without demonstrating outstanding genius at any of these occupations." The reader, after finishing this book, will attest that 15 years later the Captain had made good.

For one thing, this book contains a miniature history of the County of Los Angeles—historical aspects to be sure that are none too familiar to the average citizen and only vaguely to Stallings' friends and associates, but nevertheless of Dragnet-type fascination. Another feature is Stallings' sense of humor, present even in the most gruesome tales.

The reader will live through these pages the author's spell-bound yarns of the Sleeping Geronimo who became an obsession with Captain Stallings; of the Rattlesnake Killer, who "trussed his wife up, put her feet in a nest of rattlesnakes, and allowed them to sting her to death;" of the author's transfer to the Juvenile Division, then newly created, and his fellow-officers calling him the "Diaper Detail" and "Baby Snatcher;" of Stallings' fine description of the fellow-woman "cop," Bess, who "carried both a gun and a powder puff and one wasn't unhappy with the other;" and the author's wise comments that "it took no Dr. Kinsey to inform the Juvenile Detail that social status has as little to do with the sex urge as whiffle dust with powering a guided missile . . . debutantes and slum children are made very much alike,

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and we have had both under official investigation . . ."

The book is full of wholesome wisdom, quotations, and deductions. And the reader seems to get these and other truths in "easy lessons" or mild dosages. In his last chapter, "Dick and I," the author compares himself with the delinquent boy and says: "I had a mother who loved me, a wife and children who loved and depended on me, and friends ready to stand by me. The world had given Dick none of these precious gifts." Therefore, deduces this wise "cop," and he speaks of an experience of 15 years, "there can be fewer Dicks if we give children what they require to become mature, wholesome personalities. This is a challenge the world must face if it is ever to become a place where all men are brothers, willing and able to help each other."

These are wise words, and no less so if fellow-officers of Stallings should call the author "soft." At any rate, it would not happen to Stallings what this reviewer witnessed in one of the police stations at the fringe of Los Angeles County, after the publication of this book, when an officer brought in a six or seven year old boy and reported to the sergeant-on-duty: "He is from one of them trailer camps. He claims his home run away from him."

HANS A. ILLING, Ph.D.

Los Angeles

THE TYPEWRITER AND THE MEN WHO MADE IT. By *Richard N. Current*. The University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1954. Pp. 149. \$3.50.

THE WONDERFUL WRITING MACHINE. By *Bruce Bliven, Jr.* Random House, Inc. New York, 1954. Pp. xv, 236, \$3.95.

The almost simultaneous publication of two books concerned with typewriter history, an

obscure subject, is surprising. However, even the most cursory inspection of the two volumes dispels any thought of possible author or publisher rivalry. The books differ substantially in their scope and treatment of subject matter, and in the background of their authors.

Professor Current, a member of the history faculty of the University of Illinois, has carefully prepared a technological history of the early development of the first successful writing machine. In addition to the usual historical research sources he fortunately had available recently-discovered correspondence between some of the principal men involved in early typewriter invention and promotion. The result is a readable, scholarly contribution to typewriter history, strictly confined to the early days of the typewriter. Many bibliographical references are provided.

The other book, *The Wonderful Writing Machine*, apparently undertakes to offer a broad, lavishly illustrated history for popular consumption. Although its compilation of typewriter lore should awaken some interest in a neglected field, it falls short of its goal. Bruce Bliven, Jr., the author, has produced an entertaining book touching some aspects of the development of the writing machine and its impact on the business world.

However many readers will be left with the impression that Mr. Bliven, a professional writer, discovered in the typewriter a likely subject for a book and then set out to gather some information and material in order to carry out the project. To anyone moderately familiar with the office appliance industry it is obvious that the author's knowledge of his subject and sources of information were limited. Shortage of time or lack of sincere interest in the subject must have hampered the search for background material and its evaluation. The volume has an unmistakable Royal bias, devotes unwarranted space to trivial events, and treats some important aspects of typewriter development most casually, while completely ignoring the significance of others. The enter-

taining use of contemporary tricks of the writing trade fails to completely gloss over the superficial knowledge of subject matter.

Both books are of limited interest in the police science field. The well-qualified questioned document examiner should certainly be familiar with both, but neither is a "must" for his working reference library. Nothing was found in either that relates directly to the problems of identification and chronology encountered in document analysis. However the Bliven book does provide some general material on type design, assembly and alignment which may be of interest to those without first-hand knowledge of these aspects of typewriter manufacture.

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Book Notes

FINGERPRINTS NEVER LIE. By *Fred Cherrill*.
Macmillan Co., New York, 1954. Pp. 248.
Illus. 26. \$3.95.

The author was employed in the fingerprint bureau of Scotland Yard from 1920 to 1953. He headed the Bureau for a long time. This book is his autobiography and is concerned almost exclusively with the application of fingerprints to the solution of crime. The many cases described are interesting, and this book is well worth reading. Little attempt has been made to popularize the presentation. The style is generally good, and because of the experience of the author, the book is authoritative.

FINGERPRINTS. By *Douglas G. Browne* and *Alan Brock*. E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1954. Pp. 260. Illus. 4. \$3.50.

This, like Cherrill's book above, is a British publication concerned largely with stories about fingerprints and crime detection. It lacks the authority that marks Cherrill and is interesting, but of no great value unless you like to read everything written about the use of prints.

R. L. H.

