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FINGER PRINT RECORDS

METHOD INTRODUCED INTO SCOTLAND YARD.

Two in Sixty-Four Million May be Alike—Where System Came From:

The use of finger-prints as a means of identification has been known for uncounted ages. The origin of the practice is lost amid the shadows of receding years. Finger-print science is of the wisdom of the Orient; it is one of the many lessons taught to us by Far Eastern nations; we have proved laggard scholars, says the London "Daily Mail."

For several centuries the wise Chinaman has insisted that the lines of the holder's hand shall be impressed upon the Government passport; surreptitious transfer was thus rendered an impossibility. State documents in Japan bore as token of the Emperor's sanction the red-hued print of the royal thumb. Here was an efficient check to ambitious busy-bodies and treacherous statesmen who, in their Imperial master's service, would fain have issued edict and decree.

India long enough ago found the value of the thumb-print as a check to impudent forgers and intriguing land-grabbers. Indians, when reluctantly transferred to land, reluctantly declined to adopt the system of western illiterates—a cross written in ink—but insisted upon affixing to the deeds and documents concerned the indisputable and unchanging attestation of their thumb-prints.

FROM THE EAST.

We have been long in learning our lesson from these Wise Men of the East. It was not until 1823 that the European savants began to "discover" that there were definite and distinctive markings on the fingers, which arraigned themselves into pronounced and unmistakable patterns; it was not until forty years afterwards that an eminent British scientist and jurist drew public attention to the practical infallibility of the finger-print as evidence of identification.

The scientist of 1823 was Dr. Purkinje of Germany; the scientist of forty years later was our own Sir William Herschel. Struck by the utility of the ancient Hindoo custom, Sir William insisted that all parties concerned in the sale or purchase of land should affix their thumb-prints to the register and to the legal documents. Should a dispute arise, it was inevitable settled—and satisfactorily settled—by a comparison of the prints. Forgers of transfers had been common in India; the adoption of the new system checkmated the criminal; the forgery of transfers ceased.

MISTAKES IMPOSSIBLE.

By the advice of Sir William, who published a book on the subject which, however, did not receive the widespread attention that it deserved—the system was extended. For the past eight years receipts for their pensions have been given in India by the finger-prints of the pensioners, civil and military alike. As one writer has well and wittily put it, "In this way impersonation is prevented, and pensioners no longer live for ever."

Prof. Francis Galton was the first to appreciate, and to announce, the value of finger-print evidence in detective work. He is a scientist of great eminence and untiring industry. He is a grandson of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, and a cousin of the famous Charles Darwin, whose monumental works on "The Origin of Species," and "The Descent of Man," are among our most treasured volumes of scientific study and research.

The chances against two people's finger-prints being alike, he declared, "are one in sixty-four millions." The odds are too enormous to realize. The figures do not, to appreciate, that the system Prof. Galton has set forth is certain, indisputable, infallible.

ADOPTED IN LONDON.

The Home Office revised its method of identifying criminals. There was something simpler and more certain than the Bertillon anthropometric method. A new department was opened at the Registry of Habitual Criminals at Scotland Yard.

The finger-prints of all prisoners convicted for certain classes of crime were to be taken before they quitted the respective jails and sent to Scotland Yard, where they would be examined, classified, indexed, and filed.

How has the system worked during the thirteen years of "trial"? Last year five thousand identifications were made by its instrumentalities. The figures this year will probably be more than double. "In no single instance," said Inspector Collins, in giving evidence the other day, "was the result challenged. The finger-print system has robed the alias of identity; the man of many names and many aliases can no longer successfully plead hunger, desperation, and a first offence. His finger-prints betray him."

But, in addition, dangerous cul-

prits continue to commit their dastardly acts. The finger-print system has robed the alias of identity; the man of many names and many aliases can no longer successfully plead hunger, desperation, and a first offence. His finger-prints betray him."

More trouble," sighed McNatty, putting on his coat. "If it ain't one thing, it's another."

"What's the matter now?" queried his good wife.

"More labor troubles," answered McNatty.

"You'll find I'm hard to discourage," said the persistent suitor dogmatically. "Some day I'll make you admit you love me, and then I'll tell them—I will die happy." "I'll say it now," replied the heartless girl. "I don't mind telling a lie for a good one."

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CONTINUE

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Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, Canada

Victoria, Vancouver Island, Canada