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MR. WILLIAM A. PINKERTON Describes the Amazing Results Achieved by This Method of Identification Which the Chinese Used for Centuries and Mark Twain Made Famous in a Masterpiece

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"SEE this fellow; what do you think of his face?"

The speaker was William A. Pinkerton, present head of the great detective agency that has made the name "Pinkerton" synonymous with "detective" from Hong Kong to Chicago—and that goes both ways.

I looked at the photograph he handed me. It was that of a bald, bearded, roughly dressed man, of middle age. There was a shifty look about the eyes, a suspicious twist of the cruel looking lips, and it did not require much thought to decide that I did not like the face.

"I don't like it; looks like a crook," I hazarded. It seemed to be a safe guess for one who was talking with Mr. Pinkerton.

"That's what he is," replied the detective, "and he doesn't look any better in this picture, either, does he?" He handed me another photograph. There was the same shifty eye, the same cruel lip, the same bald forehead and stubby beard. The gentleman did not improve upon acquaintance, and I said so.

"Here's another," said Mr. Pinkerton, passing over a third portrait. I was really disgusted by the subject's appearance by this time. Those tricky eyes and that cold blooded mouth were beginning to affect me unpleasantly.

"Wouldn't like to meet him in a lonesome street, would you?" suggested Mr. Pinkerton. I admitted that I would not.

"Don't know as I would either—that is, not all of them. You see, those three pictures are photographs of three entirely different men." Then he laughed.

"You needn't feel ashamed of being deceived," he continued. "The likeness would deceive any one. There isn't a detective anywhere in the whole world who is told to pick up the man whose photograph I first showed you would not arrest either the second or the third if he met either of them and be perfectly sure that he had the right man. And until very recently there was no police department in the world that wouldn't have tried to fasten a crime committed by No. 1 on either No. 2 or No. 3 had they been arrested, and have been perfectly honest in the attempt."

"And now?"

"Now it's different," replied Mr. Pinkerton. "It has been known that 'doubles' existed. It is an old saying that 'every man has his double,' and there are plenty of cases where three men, as in these three pictures, look so much alike that it is impossible to distinguish their photographs. But there is one physical characteristic that every one possesses of which no double so far as human experience goes exists."

"And that is?"

"That is the thumb print," replied the detective. "See here." He passed me three small pictures—mere blobs of black, formless and vague looking affairs.

"This is the thumb print of the man whose photograph I first showed you. This is the print of the second man's thumbs, and this of the third. Do you see the difference?"



The Thumb Print Method of Identification Is One of Many Modern Inventions That We Owe to the Chinese.

"I declared that the world was not big enough to hide them and redoubled the efforts of our men to find them. It was practically certain that they would go back to their old line of work, so I decided the best way to catch them would be to keep track of all the yegg burglaries. Wherever a yegg was arrested, anywhere in the United States, I sent one of my men, armed with the photograph and Bertillon measurements of the two criminals, to look over the prisoners and see if they were Rudolph and Collins.

"One day we were notified of the arrest of two yeggmen in a small town in Kansas. A man from our Kansas office went to the scene, taking with him the Bertillon clerk from Kansas City Police Headquarters, and the measurements and photographs of Rudolph and Collins. The pictures looked like the two men, but the Bertillon measurements failed to identify them, and my man was uncertain, because, as I have just shown you, and as every experienced detective knows, photographs are deceptive. We had to have the men held until some one who knew them could go to the spot and identify them without question. Incidentally, the identification was made, and Rudolph and Collins were hanged. But the point I am making is that it might have been proved impossible to hold these men on the Bertillon measurements alone, while if the finger print system had been used they would immediately have been identified without question.

"The use of the thumb print for identification is rapidly spreading. Every great State prison and penitentiary now uses it, and no escaped prisoner can evade identification. He may alter his physical appearance all he pleases—he can never alter the impressions of his finger tips without amputating all his fingers. In the United States Army the finger prints of every enlisted man are recorded as a means of identification in case of desertion. Even the officers have recorded their finger prints in the War Department. In time of war this might prove to be the only way of identifying a body found on the field of battle. Thousands of unidentified dead who perished in the civil war might have been identified if this system had been in use, and many a man reported simply as 'missing' might now be known to his family, as having perished with the honors of war.

"I received a letter from the War Department recently asking me whether I thought it advisable to register the finger prints with every new enlistment. I replied that it made little difference, since the finger prints never changed, but as the records are quickly made and take up little room it might as well be done.

"There is a great advantage to an agency like ours in the use of finger prints for identification. We have no right to photograph prisoners whom we arrest, but we can take their thumb prints. Then, too, thousands of criminals are arrested in small towns and places where there are no facilities for photographing them, but any school boy can take their finger prints. A photograph of a criminal or a suspected criminal is useful in putting the police of the whole country on their guard, but the wrong man is likely to be, and often is, arrested by some too zealous policeman who is looking for glory or a reward and has fancied a resemblance between the picture and the man he arrests. If the thumb prints accompanied the pictures, a person so suspected could clear himself instantly if innocent.

Mark Twain's Novel.

"Mark Twain laid the whole truth about finger prints before the people of the United States nearly twenty years ago. His novel, 'Pudd'nhead Wilson,' which was dramatized and had a long and popular run, was based on the plain fact that finger prints never lie. I told the English authorities about 'Pudd'nhead Wilson,' of which they had never heard, a few years ago, and they were intensely interested. I sent some copies of the book to some of my friends of Scotland Yard, and they declared that Mr. Clemens had gone into the subject in the most thorough manner.

"There are such dramatic and romantic possibilities in the finger print system that I wonder that more of our writers and playwrights have not utilized them. I happened to meet a rising young American dramatist in London a short time ago and took him to Scotland Yard, where I showed him some of the things the British police have done with finger prints. He was amazed.

"To think of all this dramatic material right under our noses for years, and none of us ever touched it!" he exclaimed.

It was as plain as the nose on one's face. The first man's thumb was coarse grained, with lines and ridges set far apart and the central whorl of the simplest possible type. The second man's thumb showed very much finer lines, with a more complicated whorl, while that of the third bore a transverse scar that confused the lines and made the impression quite distinct from either of the others.

It is not an easy task to interview Mr. Pinkerton. That doesn't mean that he is not one of the most affable and courteous of men, but merely that he doesn't crave newspaper notoriety. But he was fairly launched on a subject in which he is intensely interested, and after some persuasion finally consented to talk freely and for publication.

Originated by the Chinese.

"The thumb print method of identification is one of many modern inventions that we owe to the Chinese," Mr. Pinkerton went on. "For hundreds of years, perhaps thousands, the merchants of China have used the impressions of their thumbs instead of their signatures. I have seen it so used myself, in the interior of China, where each merchant or other person who may have occasion to sign a document keeps a cake of ink at hand for this purpose. And in all the history of China it is said that never have two thumb prints

in use throughout Great Britain, and every man or woman who has ever been in custody has his finger prints registered where the police can refer to them at any time.

"A great deal that has been written about the detection of crime by means of finger prints is merely imaginative and highly colored work of writers of romances. But not all of the stories thus told are false, by any means. I was very much impressed a few years ago with a case that was brought to my attention in London.

"A band of burglars had been committing extensive depredations in a London suburb and the police could get no trace of them. Finally, in one house in which they got a great deal of plunder, they helped themselves to wine from the sideboard before departing. In the morning the only traces of their visit were the looted silver chests and the empty wine glasses on the table. Fortunately the police arrived before the servants had cleaned the glasses, and by applying a light adhesive powder to the glasses brought out and made plainly visible the finger prints of the entire band. The fingers of the burglars had left enough oily deposit on the glasses to cause the powder to adhere. These prints were photographed and compared with the police records. The identity of every one of the criminals was immediately revealed and all were arrested and convicted.

"I could tell you of hundreds of instances in which criminals have been detected and identified through finger prints. A year and a half ago a pickpocket was arrested in Chicago. He was clearly an Englishman who had not been in this country long. The police were unable to get any history of his record. I got his thumb prints and sent them to England. By the earliest possible return mail we received three photographs of the man, with a complete history of his criminal record. It had taken just five minutes to learn who he was when the English police saw the thumb prints.

"A few years ago a burglar, making his escape over an iron picket fence, caught a ring that he wore in such a way that when he leaped he tore his finger off and left it sticking in a crevice in the fence. An impression of the finger was taken and compared with the finger print records of criminals of his class. In a few hours the police had found the man they suspected, and his finger was missing.

"It is not going to be so easy to detect clever criminals by this method in the future, for so general has become the knowledge among crooks that finger prints are dangerous clues to leave behind that any really first class cracksmen or forger now wears gloves while at his work. But if every person who is arrested is registered by means of finger prints it is not going to be difficult to identify him if he ever gets into trouble with the authorities again, for his finger prints will be compared with those registered on previous occasions and there will be no chance for him to plead mistaken identity.

"I have been active for several years trying to get the National Bureau of Identification, of which I am one of the Board of Governors, to adopt this system throughout the United States. Some of our members who are using the Bertillon system have been inclined to be sceptical. But the Bertillon system, though useful when very carefully and accurately used, is liable to all kinds of errors.

"Bertillon's System.

"Bertillon's method of identification consists principally in certain minute measurements of certain parts of the body, such as the right ear, together with a record of the color of hair, eyes, &c. Now, any system that depends upon measurements is likely to go wrong whenever the person doing the measuring makes an error. A single error ruins the accuracy of the entire record. And those mistakes due to human inaccuracies, which must always be reckoned with, occur frequently.



Photographs Misleading Guide. These Being Photographs Not of the Same, but of Three Different Persons. Their Fingerprints Below Clearly Differentiate Them.

exactly alike been found.

"From China the use of the thumb print spread into the north of India, where it was adopted many years ago by the British military authorities as a means of identifying the individual members of the native troops, who look so much alike that white men have difficulty in distinguishing one from another. From this use it spread to the white troops in India, who were registered by thumb prints as a means of identifying deserters. English officers, returning from India and taking positions in the police departments of Great Britain, soon realized that here was an infallible method of identifying criminals. Now the system is

Horse for 97 Cents at a College Raffle

It was a Princeton University sport who was talking.

"Did you ever hear," said he to a bunch of New Yorkers at a bohemian table d'hote, "the true narrative of how W. H. Edwards, Commissioner of Street Cleaning for New York city—largely known as 'Big Bill,' and no infringement on President Taft's sobriquet—bought a horse for ninety-seven cents? Not marked down from a dollar, either. No? Well, listen. When the aforesaid William was cleaning up the curriculum of Princeton University some years ago there was a big and husky Nova Scotia Scot named Donald Mackenzie Macfadyen doing the same thing some grades lower.

"Macfadyen was also a boss football favorite and on the side was tutoring a foot over at Lakewood, but not in football classes. He was handling the youth with him to use on the gridiron if necessary, but incidentally to hire him to other students and thus add to his income. He paid Dwyer \$25 spot cash for the horse, including the bucked knee, and rode him home.

"At Princeton the intellectual atmosphere was too much for Chubb and he did not prove a financial success. Or it might have been his bucked knee. In any event, Macfadyen offered him for sale, but there was no rush of buyers. Somehow they were on to Chubb and that knee of his. But everybody wasn't, and presently Bill Roper, the coach, rose to the bait and offered to purchase if the horse proved satisfac-

tory on demonstration. Mac had his doubts about expecting too much of Chubb, but it was demonstration or no sale, and Roper rode away. But not for long. He was a sight when he got back to the stable, Chubb having weakened in the knee and Bill having gone over his head. Nothing but Mac's size saved him from an untimely fate, and Chubb went back into his stall.

"Forced at last to desperate measures Macfadyen finally put Chubb into a raffle, one of those running up from one cent to \$7 a chance, or however high it has to go to enable the raffle to break even on the scene, and being a judge of horse flesh and liking the looks of Chubb, who put up a good front, though he didn't weigh much more than the Communist, he bought a ticket out of the box, and its number was ninety-seven, meaning that the holder had to ante up ninety-seven cents or stay out of the game. But William the Great was a true sport, and he headed over the sum nominated in the drawing, and he waited in eager expectancy till the drawing, and behold the magical ninety-seven won the horse and William took him with him to his room or some place.

"How many times Chubb fell down with his new owner or what other painful incidents in connection with the bucked knee may have occurred is not a matter of public record, but Chubb could have been bought cheap mightily soon after the raffle, if anybody around Princeton had wanted him. But nobody did. Neither did his owner, but that was different. He might have prosecuted Macfadyen for obtaining money under false pretences, but ninety-seven cents for a horse would have been a hard case to handle. As Princeton offered to enter him in the Horse Show, New York, but not to enter him at the Horse Show. Just what for nobody knows, but it was reported some time later that he had swapped the horse to a Long Island farmer for a yellow dog and had turned the dog over to the tender mercies of the S. P. C. A. people.

"But that has nothing to do with the fact that W. H. Edwards, Commissioner of Street Cleaning for New York city, bought a horse for ninety-seven cents, has it?"