

Business Men Will Find Finger Prints Finger Prints

WILL the thumb or finger print ever replace the written signature in official documents?

It is not impossible. Already the military and police establishments of the civilized nations are extending their use of finger marks for purposes of identification, supplemental to the Bertillon measurements, which are now almost universally used in Europe, America and Japan in making the records of criminals. The idea of "Puddin' Head Wilson," so long regarded as one of Mark Twain's jokes, has turned out to be quite a sensible, practical thing. Its popularity and value grow with experience with it.

But the use of the finger print system of identification is not to end with its adoption by the police and the military. Its immense importance is being more appreciated every day, with the result that it bids fair soon to be as useful in the commercial and the legal world as in the criminal.

Merchants and businessmen, particularly bankers, are deeply interested in the system. They see in it a means of rendering forgery impossible. A written signature may be duplicated. Not so a finger print. No two finger prints in the world are identical. That is the essential merit of the system, as is now well known.

So wide has grown this general interest that a bill was introduced a few weeks ago in the California state legislature having for its object the legalizing of finger prints as signatures to wills, deeds and other legal documents. Furthermore, it is proposed to establish a central bureau, where finger prints may be registered for future reference. With such a bureau, identification of signatures—finger print signatures, that is—may be rendered easy. When a document, for instance, attested by finger print, is inspected, the print may be compared with the registered print in the central bureau and its genuineness be thus established.

Already, leading businessmen are using their finger prints in conjunction with, or in lieu of, their autographs. One of the first men on the Pacific coast to take a practical interest in the finger print system of identification for commercial purposes was President J. E. Chillberg of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific exposition at Seattle. Two years ago he had impressions made of the fingers of each of his hands, and last year he had a seal of his right thumb impression made and registered, for use in his extensive Alaskan business. C. F. White of the various large White interests on the Pacific coast, also uses his finger prints in his business.

Other businessmen are rapidly falling into line. Right here in San Francisco some of the most prominent commercial and legal lights are adopting the system. On this page appear prints of the thumbs of several prominent citizens. It will be noticed that among the specimens presented are those from the hands of some of the men identified with the forthcoming Panama-Pacific International exposition. The peculiarities of each are plainly set forth. It may be said here that while some of the people who have had their finger prints taken are quite willing to have their names associated with them, others are not. Some of them prefer to have their prints shrouded in some secrecy.

It is not generally known that there are two systems of finger print identification, or authentication, as the case may be. One, that for commercial use, or use in legal documents, is the single print system, in which the print of only one finger or thumb is required. Usually the right thumb is the digit used. It is a simple matter to make a single impression, and for constant use a seal may be made, as is now done in the case of written signatures, for multigraphing. Such a print, for constant use, should be registered and the seal, if made, should be treasured as carefully as any other similar seal.

While the adoption of the finger print system in this country for commercial, financial and legal transactions is a comparatively new thing, it is by no means a novelty in other parts of the world. It has been in use in the civil government of India for over 12 years. Its first adoption there, outside of the criminal departments, was by the director general of post offices, who issued an order making the single print system applicable to "all present and future non-gazetted officers." After Lord Herschell's wonderful success in ending litigation in a single session between illiterate poppy growers and middlemen, the system rapidly grew in favor in India, where it is now even used by some of the best Indian families in sending invitations and other social missives. For years prior to this the fanatical courts of India were swamped with cases wherein the middlemen swore that the "his (x) mark" of certain poppy growers legally transferred the crops of the latter to the middlemen, as a result of which false impersonation, perjury and forgery flourished. With the adoption of the finger print system for the illiterates this evil ceased.

In India the system is now used in the registration, pension, postoffice, survey, opium, immigration and other public departments.

Following its highly successful adoption in India, Scotland Yard has taken it up, with great profit to the administration of justice, and throughout England the testimony of those proficient in finger print decipherment is relevant and admissible in authenticating documents and instruments.

The second class of finger print practice is that in use by the various police departments that have adopted it. It involves the taking of prints of more than one finger or thumb, and is much more intricate than the single print commercial system, but not more so than the Bertillon system of measurements, where the head length, head breadth, middle finger length, and many other anthropometric details are utilized and recorded. Besides, in the Bertillon system at least two expert operators are required, and even they are sometimes fallible. With the finger print system the subject himself is the operator and there can be no errors. The record is immutable.

In the police system the impressions of the fingers of both hands are taken. The details of these are classified in an extremely technical manner, with technical terms. Thus, about 5 per cent of all impressions are "arches," 64 per cent are "loops," 25 per cent are "whorls" and "composites." These are analyzed, each having its valuation, and the impressions of each pair of fingers are recorded in fractional form. After this the numerators are added together, also the denominators, and the totals are expressed as a new fraction. By a somewhat complex arrangement of the items and the final total, the records are filed in handy form for future reference.

While the value of the finger print impressions in the business world is seemingly greatest in the way of preventing forgery of bank checks, orders and commercial letters, this is not the only benefit to be derived from its use. The finger prints may be used in much the same manner as a trade mark; they may be used to prevent a great variety of counterfeitings. To reproduce fraudulently a finger impression is well nigh impossible. It is far more complicated than a written signature, no matter how complex. Probably no man writes his signature twice in exactly the same fashion. There are always deviations, greater or less, in one signature from another. With finger prints there can be no difference, however slight, except

perhaps in the case of a wound. With more than one finger print even this remote contingency may be removed. Many people, as a natural consequence of the developments of the finger print system of records, have asked if there is not something about it that may be connected with palmistry. It seems natural, to some credulous persons, that, if each individual has marks on his fingers peculiar to himself, he must have other marks peculiar to himself on the palm of his hand. This may all be so, but no man can interpret them any more than he can interpret the finger marks. They are there, they are different for each individual, but why this is so, or what the temperamental differences, if any, may be that may or may not cause them, no one can say, except those who claim to be seers.

The more one regards the utility and value of the finger print system, the more fascinating it becomes. What is simpler than to press one's thumb or finger upon the proper substance and leave thereon an impression that can not be duplicated? The operation precludes the possibility of a forged will, or a fraudulent deed, or a false order of any kind. True, a finger print may be photographed, but the photograph can not very well be transferred to the paper to which it is desired to attach it without discovery of the deception.

For purposes of identification the finger print system is unexcelled. Operated in conjunction with a central bureau of registry, such as is contemplated, a stranger may be identified anywhere. Suppose, for example, that a man has a draft on a bank or individual in some place where he is not known by any one. If there is a registration in this place of his thumbprint, or if a duplicate of it has been sent on in advance through another channel, the man has but to make his fingerprint to be positively identified. The fingerprint inspires complete confidence. The written signature is fallible, as the

THUMB OF A D. SHEPHERD OF THE LATERAL TYPE CLASS



RIGHT THUMB OF CRAS S. FEE



OF THE CLASS KNOWN AS WHORLS



THUMB OF A W. SCOTT JR. CONTAINING AN ULNAR LOOP



PRINT OF A REPUTED SAN FRANCISCO BANKER



A NOT UNUSUAL TYPE



THUMB PRINT OF FRANK L. BROWN



THUMB PRINT OF A LOCAL MERCHANT OF THE "O" CLASS

immense number of forgeries testified, wrong name, as many deserters do after As said before, there can be but one finding civil life a failure, in order to impression for each finger of any man re-enter the service, he is promptly detected.

may be an infinite number of variations. So, too, in pension claims the soldier to his true signature, thus facilitating really entitled to the pension will be assured of getting it. If any one should impersonate him the deception will be system are of much importance. By soon exposed.

The military uses of the finger print requiring every recruit to have his Like many other inventions, ideas finger prints registered at enlistment and practices originally meant for a and then filing these in a systematic restricted field, the finger print is wide-manner, as the police do, it may readily ending its sphere of usefulness until the be found, when the finger prints are re-time may not be far distant when it ceived in the war department from the may become as familiar in autography recruiting officers, whether the newly as the typewritten letter is in corre- enlisted man has ever before been in spondence.

the service. If so, his true name may The commercial and legal worlds quickly be discovered and his identity have taken it up in earnest. They will be established. If he enlists under a surely generalize its use.

SAVING FIVE

EARL POULETT complained, during What will you charge to come to the his recent visit to New York, about house at once?

"The charge will be \$5, sir," the doctor answered.

"In London," he said, "an excellent "Very well," said the man, and ten taxicab costs only eight pence, or 15 minutes later, he and the physician were cents, a mile, but here the charge is bowling swiftly, in the doctor's car, to 50 cents a half mile. That is out- the help of the sick woman.

"I can readily believe the story I physician was about to descend, but heard the other evening in a roof gar- the man laid his hand on his arm, and den. A prominent doctor, the story at the same time pressed a \$5 bill ran, was awakened about 2 o'clock in into his palm.

"Doctor, my wife is very ill. We couldn't find a taxicab to run me out five-eight miles out in the country, for less than a ten-spot."