

The hidden hand : a contribution to the history of finger prints / [Henry Faulds].

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THE . . .
HIDDEN
HAND. . .



Vestigia nulla retrorsum.

WITH APPENDIX

BY

HENRY FAULDS, L.R.F.P. & S., F.R.Anthrop. I.,

**Late Surgeon Supt. of Tsukiji Hospital, Tokio,
and**

Ex-Police Surgeon of Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent.



Wood, Mitchell & Co., Ltd., Printers, Hanley.

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THE HIDDEN HAND

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF FINGER PRINTS

— BY —

HENRY FAULDS, L.R.F.P. & S., F.R.A.I.,

AUTHOR OF

“GUIDE TO FINGER-PRINT IDENTIFICATION”

AND

“DACTYLOGRAPHY,” ETC.

SOME considerable time ago a notice appeared in *The Times* that Sir William J. Herschel had issued a copy of an impression from a human hand made in Bengal in 1858. I applied to the publishers for a copy (by purchase) but was informed that it had been issued only for private circulation and could not be supplied to me. At the close of last year (1916), however, the baronet showed his hand. He issued a brochure entitled *The Origin of Finger Printing*. One object is stated to be, the placing on record of the discovery then made, and the evidence for this early date is contained in the imprint of a single hand, that of one Kōnāi, made at that time. The fateful lines, so dear to Palmistry, are quite nicely shown up, and many of the skin furrows on the palm are printed with considerable clearness. The part of the hand, that is, not essential, not used at all for official identification, is well done, but the important parts where the significant patterns lie are not brought out at all, but are mere black blobs of ink of no value whatever for identification. Two separate prints are contained in the Pamphlet and another on the Cover itself without any variation. The printing was done by the author himself and that some parts show up so well prove that ink and paper were as they should be

and that the author, in 1858, did not have a clear conception of what a finger-print should be for identification purposes, which is all the more remarkable as he would seem to have seen one of Bewick's perfect examples of a single impressed finger.

In the baronet's reply to my criticism that the non-essential parts came up well, he says they were "exquisite." Very well; imagine a military scout being told off to make trench patterns of five outlying knolls, and he comes back without them, but points triumphantly to an "exquisite" panorama of the surrounding landscape! The case in which this hand was imprinted was a simple civil contract, and Sir William says frankly:—"I was only wishing to frighten Kōnāi out of all thought of repudiating his signature hereafter."

Now, I have never called in question, and have more than once publicly mentioned the fact, that Sir William J. Herschel—though later than me in publishing—had a share in the discovery of the method of identification in this way. Our relative position was stated in *Nature*, for example, in the number for 19th February, 1914, which says:—"It is popularly supposed that M. Bertillon" (whose death had just been recorded) "invented the system of identification by finger-prints, but this is an error. Dr. Henry Faulds, in *Nature* of October 28th, 1880, indicated how finger-prints might be applied to ethnological classification; and his was the first printed communication upon the subject, though public and official use of finger-prints had been made by Sir William Herschel in India some years before." *Nature*, however, has omitted one point, which is of importance here. That accomplished writer, Mr Tighe Hopkins discussed the matter pretty fully in the *Daily Chronicle*, of the 30th September, 1905. He says:—"Hitherto, however, one person who plays an important part in the history of this system has missed the justice that is his due. As long ago as 1880, Mr. Faulds addressed to *Nature* a letter suggesting the identification of important criminals by using, in serial order, the imprints from the last phalynx of the ten fingers. He explained how prints could be made, showed the general character of certain patterns of fingers, and made it clear enough that the system which he outlined would sooner or later become of extreme importance in legal cases. That letter to *Nature* contained the first proposal to use this method of identification in

jurisprudence. The claim put in for Sir William Herschel does not touch Mr. Faulds's. Sir William had been taking 'sign-manuals' by finger impressions in India; but the first systematic plan, and the first that was communicated to the English Press, was the one that is outlined in this treatise. Further, what Mr. Faulds advanced in 1880 is what has been officially adopted, namely, the record for old criminals of each of the ten fingers in serial order."

In the *Index Medicus* of the U.S. my contribution to *Nature* was entered as the first on the subject known to literature. Sir William Macewen, F.R.S., of Glasgow University, was house surgeon in Glasgow Royal Infirmary when I was dresser with him there. He wrote:—"Dr. Henry Faulds was the first to bring under my notice the subject of finger-prints and their uses in personal identification. This was many years before it was spoken of by any person and, so far as I am aware, long before the police took any notice of it. At the same time that he showed me his results he said that he was urging the police to take it up as one of the best means of identifying individuals who might come under their attention. (Signed) William Macewen, F.R.S."

I have no note of the exact date but remember the occasion perfectly and made several imprints then. It was either in 1886 or 1887. Soon afterwards I saw Sir Woollaston Franks at the British Museum and mentioned the matter to him. In May of 1886, Herbert Spencer alludes to the subject. Thereafter I interested one or two detectives whom I meet in police work connected with my own practice. Their scepticism gave me some hints. Inspector J. B. Tunbridge then made an official appointment with me from Scotland Yard and he spent a forenoon with me studying the details of the system. I offered to demonstrate by a model cabinet my dictionary method of indexing records, taking prints from the London police themselves. This was felt, however, to be inopportune as legislation was needed. I believe his conclusion was that the system was scientific and accurate but too delicate for ordinary police manipulation. Bertillon's system afterwards adopted broke down in police hands from this cause, but my system of prints of ten fingers in serial order has been successful everywhere.

I have quoted a portion of Inspector Tunbridge's letter in my *Dactylography* on this interview. He afterwards became Commis-

sioner of Police in New Zealand, where he induced the authorities to adopt the finger-print system. It soon extended to Australia.

In *Science and the Criminal*, 1911 (Pitman) Mr. C. Ainsworth Mitchell, B.A., F.I.C. (p. 66), we read:—"Dr. Faulds, who, while at a hospital in Japan, made an exhaustive study of the finger impressions of the Japanese, appears to have been the first to suggest the possibility of tracing a criminal by the imprints of his fingers upon external objects."

The Lancet of October 5th, 1912, says "The proposal to use dactylography as a means of identification in such cases [medico-legal] "was first communicated to the public by Mr. Faulds, who is a member of the medical profession, in a contribution to *Nature*, October 28th, 1880."

The *Law Times*, again, under the heading of "Proof by Fingers" said, in October 28th, 1905:—"Credit where credit is due. Mr. Henry Faulds claims to honourable mention in connection with the system of identification by finger-prints have been strangely overlooked. He was unquestionably the first to propose this method in an article in *Nature*, of the 28th October, 1880. Mr. Faulds deals carefully with points of importance raised in recent newspaper controversies, and in these discussions he has elicited a number of practical hints likely to prove valuable in the development of a system which is still, of course, in its infancy. This treatment of the 'mask murders' case, for instance, is admirable, and a sample of the caution he would enforce upon all investigators when the question is one of life or death."

e/ Professor Otto Schlaginhaufen of Zürich, in the August number of Gagenbauer's *Jahrbuch* for 1905, states that with my contribution to *Nature* in 1880, there began a new period in the investigation of the lineations by which they were brought into the service of criminal anthropology and medical jurisprudence. After a summary of the chief points in my contribution, he concludes that I had shown a method of gaining knowledge of man's genetic descent by a study of the corresponding lineations of certain animals, such as apes, monkeys, lemurs, etc., and that I had indicated other ways too, in which medical jurisprudence might profit besides that of identification.

Sir William J. Herschel wrote in *Nature*, after seeing my proposal in print there, claiming that he had been using that very method "now more than twenty years." This date goes back then, to that of the "Hidden Hand" of 1858. Dr. Schlaginhaufen, who had evidently studied finger-prints exhaustively, deals with a brief correspondence that ensued, thus (my translation—the original German is contained in my Dactylography):—

"Faulds's publication was earlier in time, but Herschel showed by the publication of a half official-letter that he had been engaged with the method from 1877 onwards. In any case both observers had independently come to the same idea, and while the material which Herschel supplied was of greater service for special criminal anthropology, Faulds had in his first communication grasped the investigation of the skin lineations from a higher standpoint, and had indicated the way to it through a more comprehensive plan."

Sir William had acknowledged my priority of publication and I had no desire to dispute the fair verdict of the impartial Zürich professor. Since then I have written fully on the subject and have had much correspondence with experts of many lands. Naturally enough, on seeing this pamphlet of 1916, I offered a few observations on the hand which had remained tenderly sheltered from expert observation so long. The author in reply, rather testily derides my conclusions (in 1880) as to the permanency of the finger-patterns as unscientific, while holding that his own experiments and observations are the proper and legitimate scientific foundation of that conclusion. Happily we agree as to the fact itself of the permanency of the patterns, under all known conditions of life, and that fact remains undisputable. As a student of medicine in Glasgow Royal Infirmary I had been led under Lord Lister's teaching to observe the migrations of pigment corpuscles in the skin of frogs, which caused the patterns of their spots to change. In Japan I afterwards studied similar pattern changes in leaves and petals and in the eyes of infants, then those in human freckles and the white patches of leucoderma—a disease at one time confused with leprosy. A negro's face became patched with white when blistered with Spanish fly, by similar migrations. I have elsewhere described how I was first led to observe human finger-patterns from seeing similar indentations in prehistoric pottery found among the low cliffs of the ancient beach

around the Bay of Yedo. In the 'Seventies' little toy tea-sets of terra cotta were on sale everywhere in Tokyo for a copper or two. They were moulded by human fingers which left their loops and scrolls indented upon the ware, quite clearly with a decorative *motif*. Sometimes a characteristic pattern would turn up again and again and could be recognised like a familiar face. The great variety of those patterns also struck me and I began to sketch their forms. For several years in Glasgow, before beginning the study of medicine, it had been part of my daily duty to look after patterns in a large factory, and now I profited by my early experience. I expected that those patterns of the skin might change as other patterns visibly did, but perhaps much more slowly. We know how a young stag's horns first appear as buds, and then branch out year by year. Would any such changes be found in the skin patterns? We do not find the early unborn infant show a primitive type of finger-pattern like that of some monkeys and lemurs and then go on developing later evolutionary stages as in some organs. The unborn fetus of very early date has patterns just like those of adults. We cannot, like the clever showman perhaps exhibit Cromwell's skull at different periods in his life, but a good many observations give some clue in the case of finger-patterns. I had under training in biology some very acute and enthusiastic Japanese pupils, many of whom afterwards attained good positions as doctors. Under my guidance those students set out to test such points carefully. We began by shaving off the ridges which contained the patterns near the finger-tips till no pattern could be traced. Yet whenever the skin grew up the old pattern came again into view with unimpeachable fidelity. Then we used pumice-stone, sand paper, emery dust, various acids, caustics, and even spanish fly, remembering the white patch on the negro's face. Special attention was given to the earlier months of infancy when changes are rapid. An epidemic of scarlet fever, then new to Japan and very virulent, gave me a remarkable opportunity for observing the patterns—after the severe peeling of the old skin—in a great number of cases. None of them were ever observed to have changed in the least. For more than two years this had gone on before I wrote, and observations have been kept up till the present time. During the period before October, 1880, many thousands of digital impressions were taken and compared mutually, while the same fingers were many times reprinted and re-examined with the greatest minuteness.

They were scrutinised even with some little bias in favour of variation, but no single change was discovered in any one of the patterns. Rather suddenly one day the conception dawned upon me of a system of identification—the want of which was then being keenly felt in medical circles—by means of a serial record of the fingers of both hands. By assuming that a kind of syllabic alphabet—as in telegraph codes—could be formed to represent the various types of patterns, a word of five (or ten) syllables would yield in its dictionary place the guide—even in a very big register—to a group of record cards in which the individual sought for, if he were there, would quite easily be found. Such a code-word might be, for example, *Ab-ra-ca-dab-ra*, or *Con-stan-ti-no-ple*, or in a ten-finger register, both combined. Under the first name (if employed by itself) we might find ten or twenty individuals agreeing typically, but each differing quite visibly from the others in detail. A girl fresh from school could look up the records in the case for the expert's comparison.

Having attained to the conviction that we might rely on a practical degree of permanency, enough to form a basis to work upon, classification became at once a pressing problem. It would be useless to stow away hundreds of thousands of imprints if you could not pick out one when wanted. My system is to that now officially in use—without the slightest exaggeration—as the Arabic numeration is to that of the old Roman system (try to add a column of Roman numerals), or it is what the natural system in botany is to the artificial system of Linnaeus, once in vogue, and is explained in my *Dactylography*. It seems “clear and valuable” said the *Police Review*. Let us now look into Sir William's “sustained experiments,” with which he derisively compares mine at this late date. I shall quote first his own testimony. In the Appendix to his pamphlet of 1916, he writes:—“When I speak of the discovery of finger-prints nigh sixty years ago, I should wish to be understood correctly. I cannot say that I thought of it as such until Mr. Galton examined old records in search of earlier notices of the subject. What he found had been beyond my ken, and I never enquired for myself. The fascination of experiments and the impelling object of them were all I cared about.” What that object was precisely he does not seem to reveal. The experiments themselves seem to have consisted simply in printing impressions. No attempt at classification is

mentioned. No exact method of storing or recording the impressions is indicated. The number of fingers in a given case was variable nor was the particular finger in a series always the same. Little care seems to have been taken to signify what finger of which hand was being imprinted for future comparison. I cannot see that any system had been even fairly sketched. In regard to all such particulars my own copper-plate outline forms of 1879-80 were quite precise and fixed, and a space existed for each of the ten fingers in serial order. The original proof sheet is now in the library of the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons.

I come now to Sir F. Galton's statements. In his work on *Finger-Prints* (1892), writing about *Persistence of Patterns*, twelve years after me, he says :—"The evidence on which these conclusions are founded is considerable, and almost wholly derived from the collections made by Sir W. Herschel, who most kindly placed them at my disposal. They refer to one or more, and in a few instances, to the whole hand, of fifteen different persons." Again, in Chapter VI. of the same work we read (p. 89) :—"Those which I have studied more or less exhaustively are derived from the digits of fifteen different persons. In some cases repeated impressions of one finger only were available ; in most cases of two fingers ; in some of an entire hand. Altogether the whole or part of repeated impressions of between twenty and thirty different digits have been studied. I am indebted to Sir W. J. Herschel for almost all these valuable data, without which it would have been impossible to carry on the inquiry."

The pamphlet now makes it clear that a goodly proportion of those who yielded finger-prints to Sir William were neither suspects nor convicted persons, but people of good social position enjoying a merry pastime. The hand of Kōnāi, which figures in the pamphlet twice, was that of a man voluntarily signing a simple civil contract and contains no finger-prints in a technical sense at all. The material, therefore, described by the Zürich professor in good faith as of greater service than mine for Criminal anthropology, when examined in this light, is seen to be rather tenuous.

The taking of those impressions was spread over a period of thirty years (1858-1888), so that about one finger a year must have been observed and recorded as the scientific basis of Sir William's claim to have proved permanency. But another very pertinent

question now arises,—how many of those experiments had been made before the baronet first made his rival claim, subsequent to my own publication? He cannot justly enumerate in his list cases coming after October 28th, 1880, while severely limiting mine to that date. It is so easy for the fairest mind to believe afterwards that ideas were at one time possessed which only came by subsequent suggestion. Hence the importance always accorded in scientific work to priority of publication. My deduction may have been unscientific but it has been justified by a cosmopolitan army of scientists and criminologists, not always friendly. It has altered the value of criminal statistics in a revolutionary way, making aliases impossible. Did Sir William ever really aim at testing in a scientific way the question of permanency? Did he ever clearly envisage the problem of permanency? I am compelled to suppose, on the evidence before me, that the vital importance of this point did not dawn upon him till Mr. Galton (afterwards, Sir Francis) came to his aid, eight years after I had published. Only once or twice does Sir William show us a comparison being made of prints with each other between 1858 and 1880. The cases mentioned are as follows:—On page 10 four fingers of Dr. R. F. H. are shown as printed in 1859 and they are clear and quite useful. It is then stated—"Twenty-one years later, in 1880, he was still there, and sent me a 'repeat' print of his fingers." It is not said they were asked for by the baronet, nor if done before or after the date of my publication in the *same* year. It is not stated that they were compared and were found similar. A Pickwickian judge would promptly rule out *that* evidence. On page 29 are shown the imprints of two fingers of W. Waterfield in 1860, and again in 1877 the same fingers. They are well done and afford an excellent comparison of two fingers with seventeen years between, and they quite agree. On page 30 are two fingers of Sir William Herschel himself in 1859 and again in 1877. The right index in both cases is clearly printed. The second finger of the right hand is blurred at the core a good deal in the 1859 imprint, while that of 1877 is clear. I have pointed out quite strenuously the danger of blundering in such a case as the smeary part may be read in more than one way. That is Sir W. J. Herschell's case, so far as the *evidence* adduced by him goes. On page 28, however, he says:—"As time went on it was chiefly the incessant evidence of my own ten fingers and of my whole hand, which wrought in me the overwhelming conviction that the lines on the skin persisted indefinitely." Precisely. The matter could not have been

set forth in a better way. A conviction like this, as everyone feels who breaks through new jungle, may come upon a man suddenly, be justified amply by a thousand subsequent reasons, and yet he may not succeed in conveying to others the full force of the unregistered evidence that appealed so strongly to himself. But he nowhere says or shows that this overwhelming conviction came before my article. Surely the same measure and latitude must be yielded to the rival claimant that he demands for himself. If this had been frankly done by himself and his friend Galton some ink might have been spared that has left unpleasant stains.

In Japan *The Chrysanthemum* was an organ dealing with matters relating to the folk-lore, language, literature, and natural history of the land of the Rising Sun. Some translations first published there reappeared in my *Nine Years in Nipon* (Gardner, 1885). In one of these from Bakin, "Lost Child tickets" are mentioned as one of the commendable customs of the country. These contain the name and address of the infant, so that when a child goes astray the police or neighbours have simply to look at the ticket when all necessary particulars are obtained. In a foot-note I add "the practice is one which might well be imitated." One or two letters were written by me on the subject which I regret I cannot now trace. The Identification Discs of Armageddon are the same idea carried out. A disc, however, may easily be removed, and a soldier told me of a Turkish woman going about in Gallipoli with necklaces composed of them ; but finger-patterns remain long after other parts of the skin have perished. Sir Wm. Herschel dedicates his recent pamphlet to Sir Edward Henry, Commissioner of the London Police, whose work I have duly recognised in my *Dactylography*. He has not mentioned me as a contributor to the study of a comparatively recent and very intricate subject, rendered of late quite needlessly intricate by extraordinary unscientific nonsense about smudges and the probabilities in connection with identification by their means. In a case exhibited at the Japanese Exhibition in London some years ago one chief exhibit of the excellence of Scotland Yard's methods was the smudge by the evidence of which, some contend, two men were hung. The smudge was probably not that of the suspect, as I have mentioned in my *Guide*, and I examined it carefully by measurement in court, though not a subpoenaed witness. The men were guilty enough, I believe, but how could one smudge convict two men?

The single blotchy impress was composed of at least three superimposed smudges, and the only prints available for comparison were the outside curves which were not congruous. Who was responsible for that most miserably presented exhibit?

I have no desire to write again on this subject unless when new scientific material may emerge. One feels shut out now even from the handling of fresh material, and a Police Inspector recently—having in mind a certain regulation—asked if I really took prints now! Imagine Hugh Millar, when as a humble quarryman he struck *The Old Red Sandstone* and made it begin to live its old life again. Suppose now the Red Wax and Tape department of the Circumlocution Office to come along then and say, "*Red Sandstone!* why that belongs to us." Then they seal up all the fossils, and appoint a clever postman—whose departmental colour is red—to keep the records secret and official.

It is a wrong to me and other medical or biological workers personally, and most injurious to the state and to society to sterilise those gigantic accumulations of fruitful material as has been done, and especially injurious is it to have done so at so early a stage in the development of the science of Dactylography. I do indeed feel, and wish now very strongly to express my indignation at the way in which incompetent officials—active or retired—have dealt with a complex study needing help and encouragement rather than frivolous and ill-qualified criticism. Do those foolish people who have done so little themselves think there is nothing more yet to be learned on this subject? They are wrong. Says Samuel Taylor Coleridge with becoming gravity:—"I deem it a writer's duty, and think it creditable to his heart to feel and express a resentment proportioned to the greatness of the provocation and the importance of the object."

CONTRIBUTIONS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

FINGER-PRINTS

BY THE AUTHOR.

On the Skin-furrows of the Hand. "Nature," October 28th, 1880.

Dactyloscopy. *St. Thomas's Hospital Gazette*, 1905.

Guide to Finger-Print Identification.

Wood, Mitchell & Co., Stoke-on-Trent, 1905.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

The article in *Nature*, 1880, was the first published suggestion, and was no doubt quite original on the part of the writer, to whom belongs all the credit due.—*The Times*.

A zealous and original investigator of finger-prints . . . He can write well, and the photographic illustrations which his publisher has supplied are excellent.—SIR F. GALTON, in *Nature*.

A particularly lucid account of a complicated subject, and is interesting not only to specialists but to the general reader and the curiosity hunter alike.—*The Westminster Gazette*.

This is altogether a very sane little treatise. It should be in the hands of every one who has to do with identification by finger-patterns.—*The Law Times*.

A most valuable scheme under proper safe-guards. Both the scheme and the safe-guards are adequately dealt with here.—*The Law Magazine and Review*.

How the English Finger-Print Method arose.

A pamphlet for local circulation. Wood, Mitchell & Co.

Finger-Prints. A chapter in the history of their use for personal identification. "Knowledge," April, 1911.

Dactylography, or the Study of Finger-Prints.

[xxth Century Science Series] Milner & Co., Halifax, 1912.

[PRESS NOTICES OF DACTYLOGRAPHY].

(The Author) here writes in an interesting way on a subject with which his name has long been associated as an authority, and the reader is provided with a trustworthy account of the technique of printing and scrutinising finger-patterns—and of classifying them.—*Nature*.

. A chapter of the book is devoted to the exposition of a syllabic method of classifying finger-prints, which appears to the layman most clear and valuable We think the student of finger-prints cannot fail to be instructed and helped by a perusal of its contents.—*Police Review*.

Poroscopy, the Scrutiny of Sweat-Pores for Identification.

"Nature," August 21st, 1913.

APPENDIX.

COPIES of this innocent pamphlet sent to foreigners interested in the English method of Identification by Finger-prints were returned to me without comment from the Censor's office, where humour does not seem to have found a congenial home. Not being willing to imperil society I loyally refrained from distribution.

Since this pamphlet was published an editorial paragraph appeared in *the Athenæum* of May, 1917, thus:—“Although Sir William Herschel for official purposes in India had taken finger impressions as far back as 1858, priority of publication rests with Mr. Faulds, a member of the medical profession, who in 1880 addressed to *Nature* a letter containing a proposal for a systematic method of finger-print identification, and its application in medical jurisprudence.”

This year a work has been issued from Boston, U. S., on *Personal Identification* by Prof. H. H. Wilder & Bert Wentworth. It is pointed out that until 1880 the one or two previous investigators had only concerned themselves with physiological questions about the skin patterns. Identification by this means had not then been discussed at all as a scientific proposal. “As in all great inventions and discoveries the honor of first proposing this must be shared by at least two men, while others have co-operated by furnishing many facts, and suggestions. . . These two men were both Englishmen; they

were both living in Asia at the time of their discovery, and they both announced their ideas through the columns of an English scientific journal, entitled *Nature*, within a month of each other, in the year 1880. In the issue of October 28 of that year, Dr. Henry Faulds, of Tsukiji Hospital, Tokio, published a letter with the title 'On the Skin Furrows of the Hand,' in which he unfolded the method of taking impressions with printer's ink, and at the same time sent a number of samples to the editor. . . This author has anticipated in a remarkable manner the most important lines of the subject, even to the identification of a man by the traces of finger patterns left upon the objects he has handled, and the identification of a detached hand." (p. 339).

Now here comes the point I wish to be noted :—"Unfortunately, during all this time, between 1858 and 1880, while Herschel was employing and extending a simple form of finger-print identification,"—at the rate of about a single finger in one year! "he seems never to have published anything on the subject, so that Faulds was quite justified in considering his letter of October 28, 1880, the first mention of a new idea." It was certainly so indexed, I may add, in the U. S. *Index Medicus*.

The authors candidly mention in a foot-note that Herschel's pamphlet containing a reproduction of the hand "was unfortunately not available at the time when this chapter was written, yet the main facts are represented above." The result of the comparison is that Herschel's "long official employment of a finger-print system" is contrasted with my own contemptible "three years study."

In the quotation from Schlaginhaufen on p. 5 of this pamphlet, appears Herschel's own statement that his official finger-print work began in 1877. He wrote on August 15th, 1879, asking that his method should be adopted, and in the Autumn of 1880 he was back in England, the reply he received from the Inspector-General of India, having seemed to be "very discouraging" [see his letter to *Nature*, November 22, 1894]. This surely leaves a very small fragment of the period between 1877 and autumn of 1880, which includes his voyage from India, in which to prosecute his "official" work whatever its obscure nature was. As to his *method* of securing

identification, he had none whatever, as his own records show conclusively. He indeed says : "The decisiveness of a finger-print is now one of the most powerful aids to justice. Our possession of it derives from the impression of Kōnāi's hand in 1858." But then he had just said that the possibility of such "use of a finger-print did not dawn upon me till after long experience, and even then it became no more than a personal conviction for many years more." We have seen that the worthy Baronet only wished to frighten a contractor out of any danger of repudiating his signature, and elsewhere a similar statement is made. Nothing could be more remote than this from the scientific aspect of finger-print evidence. I allege fearlessly that no conception of the method existed in 1858 or even in 1878, in the most germinal form, in Herschel's mind. His claim was not, as the American writers I have quoted seem to indicate, *accidentally* made to appear in *Nature* in the same month. He saw my letter, recalled his old recreation and then wrote, hoping something could be made of it. His subsequent statements written long after newspaper literature had become saturated with the subject, might lead one to suppose that he had conceived the method in 1858, a position no critical expert would concede. Refer, for example, to his own remarks quoted in p. 7 of this brochure, and uttered for the very purpose of removing this false impression. To the very end of his life Sir William never, I believe, quite firmly grasped the method in its delicacy of fine manipulations, its marvellous capacity for self-classification, like words dropping into their places in a dictionary, and the direct and simple appeal it makes to a jury's common sense. Messrs. Wilder & Wentworth, suggest that but for Sir William Herschel's appearance in the same year "Dr. Faulds might have a legal claim to the discovery of the system." I admit a modest desire to have my name associated with the English method of identification.

A suggestion was made some years ago that the same should be called the "Faulds-Herschel" system, and I should consider that a reward for my humble efforts, following not the *Ego, et rex meus* principle, but the precedent that priority of publication and alphabetical order should govern the arrangement of names. I can still, at 76 years of age, earn a living by the practice of my profession, and I shall try to do without that callous "public assistance" which

is the only systematic form of reward our country at present provides for its pioneers in scientific discovery. I rejoice to think that the system now beginning to be so popularly understood, is not only now of great practical service to society, but that it reveals at the very threshold of early humanity, an organic prophecy of profound teleological significance as to the coming race, one of the most striking facts in anthropology. The strange beings with portentously big brains, tender touch and nimble tongues are not all cast in one crude Bolshevik mould, but each comes into the world adorned with the stamp of individuality which he can never shake off.

REGENT HOUSE,
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STOKE-ON-TRENT.





