

THE BLACK MASK

A MAGAZINE OF MYSTERY, THRILLS AND SURPRISE

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The Finger Print Bureau

By J. H. Taylor

Beginning with this issue, the Finger Print Department will be conducted by Mr. J. H. Taylor. Mr. Taylor is Superintendent, Bureau of Identification, Department of Navigation of the Navy Department. Readers desiring information or advice on subjects relating to Finger Prints may communicate with Mr. Taylor, in care of THE BLACK MASK MAGAZINE. There is no charge for this service. Mr. Taylor requests, however, that letters requiring replies be accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope. Letters of general interest, together with their answers, will be printed in each issue.

EVER since the world began, someone has endeavored to find two things that are exactly alike, but from a scientific point of view this has never been accomplished. The leaves on the trees resemble each other so closely that it is extremely difficult for anyone not experienced in botany to detect the difference. An experienced botanist can at a glance see that there is no resemblance whatever.

The closest resemblance ever found in the world is believed to have been between twins. Their facial expression is in a great many cases as near alike as it is possible to be; even their mannerisms, likes and dislikes are the same, and if these twins are dressed alike it is practically impossible to tell one from the other. It is a well-known fact in the case of the mother of the twins, who could not tell one from the other, that she washed one baby twice and did not wash the other, as she said that it was impossible for her to tell which was which when they were undressed; their physical appearance being so near alike.

The reason for twins resembling each other so closely has been thoroughly explained in several magazine articles, and it is claimed that identical twins spring from a single germ which is fertile and breaks, thereby producing twins, and it can be clearly understood why the disposition and facial expressions of these children would be exactly alike, but God in His wonderful workings has

made it possible for the scientific world to differentiate these twins by the lines on the soles of the feet, the palms of the hands, and the finger-tips. In identical twins it is known to those who have had occasion to examine the impressions of the feet that the patterns of the right foot of a twin will be very similar to the patterns on the right foot of the other twin. This has confused a great many people, and they are of the opinion that twins are identical in every way, but when the minute ridge characteristics in the finger prints and the soles of the feet are examined, to the finger print expert it is easily shown that there is no more resemblance between the twins than there is between people of different parentage.

Of all the people in the world since the year 400 B. C. there have never been found two individuals who have had the same finger prints, or foot-prints. Photographs and descriptions have been found very misleading to the various Police Departments throughout the country, and at times they have caused very serious mistakes in identity, as it is a well-known fact that there are a great many people, who though they are not related, have practically the same facial expression, walk, or mannerisms, and by a person not experienced in identification, the persons would to all intents and purposes be pronounced the same.

In identification work in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps where they have to deal with thousands of men every year, no other system that has ever been invented would answer the purpose other than the finger print system, as by this system no matter whether they are identical twins, or their facial expressions are identically the same, they are known by their finger prints, and there can never be any mistake as to their identity.

Identical twins are those who resemble each other the most, and unless some system had been devised such as the finger print system, there would never have been any way of differentiating twins, or people who closely resembled one another. In the case of criminals and fugitives from justice, these men will resort to every possible method to change their general appearance, such as using chemicals to change the color

of their hair, and will also at times use pneumatic suits in order to change their appearance from slender to stout, but with all of these disguises there has never been found any plan by which they can change their finger prints, and their identity is forever known once their finger prints have been taken.

Anyone who has had occasion to examine the photographs of a given individual taken at different periods of life will see the most marked changes in each photograph, and a novice would be unable to state whether or not they were taken of the same person. The resemblance in photographs has been so close that some of the foremost Bertillon operators in this country have been baffled. In the case of two negroes in the Leavenworth Penitentiary, both under the name of William West, their facial expressions and measurements

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were so much alike that the Bertillon operator could not state positively by their photographs that they were different individuals, but their finger prints showed them to be entirely different.

In the Navy there have been any number of twins who have enlisted, and the only possible way they could have been told apart was by their finger prints, as when they are placed in uniforms of the same rating their general appearance is more marked, and harder

pressions as positive proof of identity, and by this method there is no possibility of a person losing his identity if his finger prints have ever been recorded, regardless of how closely he might resemble someone else.

FINGER PRINT PATTERNS— PART III WHORLS

LAST month, you were told that the Whorl pattern would be explained to



WHORLS

to tell apart than when in civilian clothes.

The finger prints of the human race are divided into four (4) general types, and these impressions will be found in the fingers of everyone, but the ridge characteristics which determine identity have never been known to appear in the same place in a different person's fingers. The possibility of a ridge characteristic appearing in the same place in two different persons' fingers is one in a million, and a great many of the courts throughout the United States have accepted seven (7) ridge characteristics appearing in the same place in two im-

you. The accompanying illustration shows two Whorls. A Whorl is a pattern in which the ridges make a Whorl, or a complete turn, about one central point. You can distinguish a Whorl by the fact that it has two Deltas while a Loop has but one Delta. (A Delta is the outer terminus of a pattern, the point from which we start to count ridges. It is called a "Delta" because it usually resembles the Greek letter "Delta" or a small triangle.)

Maybe you have a Whorl pattern on one of your fingers. Study them closely and see if you can find any Whorls.