



# Crimebusters

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# Crimebusters

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## Introduction

Most people want to live in peace, safe from danger and harm. That is why laws were invented. Different groups may have different laws, but every group has laws. Laws have changed over time, but the idea of law goes back to the dawn of history.

Sadly, outlaws have been around just as long. Some people refuse to live by the rules. They don't care about what's right. They give way to greed and hate. They try to take what isn't theirs, and they don't care whom they hurt in doing so.

Detectives and police officers work to protect us from such criminals. They are

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crimebusters. This book tells the story of six great crimebusters from different times in history. Some have used force to fight force. Some have used their brains to solve dark mysteries and track down criminals. Some of these crimebusters lived and worked in the United States. Some worked in other countries. All are real.

Crime can touch anyone, but there is no need to give in to fear. Reading about these great crimebusters may give you hope and show you ways to watch out for yourself. Perhaps these true stories can help you take control of your own life.

## The Story of Fingerprints



**A**dolf Beck stepped out of a house on Victoria Street in London. Suddenly, a gray-haired woman grabbed his arm.

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“You’re the one!”

Beck thought she was crazy. He tried to shake her off. But a crowd gathered, and the woman yelled out her story. This man had cheated her, she said. First, he had fooled her into thinking he was a rich lord. Then, he had tricked her out of jewelry, watches, and money.

Beck was hauled to court. There, a dozen women waited to face him. All had been cheated by some phony lord. All of them looked at Beck and said, “That’s him.”

They were wrong, but Beck could not prove it. He went to prison for seven long

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years. After he got out, he tried to patch his life together. But one day, he was walking down a street when a woman ran up to him. “You’re the one!” she cried. “You’re the one who cheated me!”

And the nightmare started all over again.

This time, Beck was lucky. The real con man was arrested while Beck was in jail. He looked quite a lot like Beck. The women he had cheated were brought to court again. When they saw this new man, they realized their mistake. They were so ashamed they could hardly meet Beck’s eyes. Their mistake had cost Adolf Beck

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seven years of his life.

The sad case of Adolf Beck proved a point. The police needed a foolproof way to identify people. Strangely enough, such a method was already known. But the police were not using it yet.

The man who found this method had lived in Bengal, India. His name was William Herschel. Early in life, Herschel worked as a clerk. He spent a lot of time staring through a window. He began to notice the marks people left on the glass with their greasy fingers. He studied those marks closely. He noticed that each one was made up of tiny lines. The lines



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formed patterns of loops and curves and swirls. He began to collect the fingerprints of people he knew. He kept them in albums, just the way some people keep stamps. He collected fingerprints from his friends, his fellow workers, and people passing through his office. He took the same people's fingerprints again and again. He wanted to see how they would change. He collected fingerprints for 19 years.

Slowly, two facts dawned on him. Fingerprints never changed. And no two people had the same fingerprints. Suddenly, the great idea hit him. The police should use fingerprints to identify

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criminals! Herschel wrote a long letter to the police chief of his state. He explained all about fingerprints.

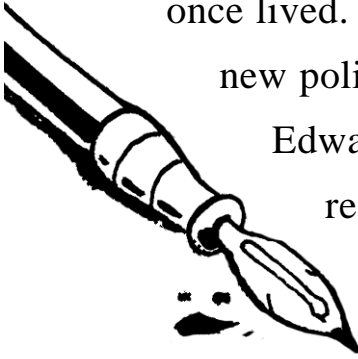
The police chief ignored him.

Someone took a copy of Herschel's letter to England, however. Many years later, in the 1880s, the scientist Sir Francis Galton saw Herschel's work. He was struck by Herschel's idea. He wrote a book about it, called *Fingerprints*. He offered it to the British police.

The British police ignored Galton.

But someone took a copy of Galton's book to India—to Bengal, in fact. This was the very place where Herschel had

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once lived. Bengal now had a new police chief named Sir Edward Henry. When he read *Fingerprints*, he thought the idea sounded interesting.

He ordered all the police under his command to start fingerprinting the people they arrested. He also told them to look for fingerprints at the scene of any crime.

A few years later, the manager of a tea plantation was murdered. The local police took fingerprints from the victim, as they

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had been ordered. They took fingerprints from all his servants and workers, too. Then they found a bloody fingerprint on a calendar in the dead man's room. They sent this to Inspector Henry, along with all the other fingerprints.

Henry could tell that the mark on the calendar was a thumbprint. It came from a right hand. It matched none of the prints taken from anyone who lived or worked at the plantation. Whose thumbprint was it?

Henry talked to people in the area. He asked if the victim had any known enemies. The answer was yes.

Three years earlier, the victim had

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fired his servant Charan. He had accused this servant of stealing from him. Charan had been sent to prison. He had sworn at the time to get even someday.

Charan's fingerprints were on file. They were among the first ones taken under Henry's orders. Henry studied Charan's right thumbprint. It matched the print on the calendar. Charan was arrested. His thumbprint was used to send him back to prison.

After the Charan case, police around the world began to take fingerprints more seriously. Today, fingerprints are used to solve crimes every day. If only they had

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been in use a hundred years ago! They might have saved Adolf Beck a lot of grief.

