

¶All good Filipino lawyers have heard of him—

## OSBORN—THE FAMOUS HANDWRITING EXPERT

IN a New York skyscraper is the office of Albert S. Osborn, an elderly man who has devoted most of his life to performing feats of observation that are truly astounding. He is perhaps the greatest scientific detective on earth. But he would deny that he is a detective at all. He calls himself simply a student of questioned documents. His business is to sift truth from falsity by examination of handwriting, typewriting, paper and ink. He has been known to observe a minute detail of a fraudulent will, maybe just the way a piece of paper was folded, and thus upset a million-dollar claim.

In a courtroom one day, Osborn was asked to examine a note, Exhibit A, in a case involving several hundred thousand dollars. The supposed author of the note was dead and the question was whether the signature was genuine. Lawyers for both sides insisted that they wanted only the truth. After studying the document a few moments, Osborn said:

"Yes, the signature is probably genuine—"

One lawyer looked pleased.

"But", Osborn continued,

"the note itself is *not* genuine."

The other lawyer looked pleased.

"You'll observe," he said, "that this crease has worn through the glazed surface of the paper. Yet the ink in the signature is not blurred—because it was written *before* the crease was made, on a hard smooth surface. But where the crease crosses certain words in the note itself the letters are blurred, just as if they had been written on a piece of blotting paper. They were written *after* the crease had worn through, and long after the signature was attached."

A still more difficult case had to do with a typewritten letter in which a prominent business man had made promises he later wished to deny. He branded his letter a forgery.

"I wrote a letter," he admitted, "but not *that* letter. I kept a copy of the letter I actually did write. Here it is."

Osborn took this copy and studied it in his laboratory. He then told the writer so much about his past performances that the man perhaps still wonders if he were dealing with a mind reader.

"This is a copy of a letter you wrote," Osborn said, "but not a copy of the one you mailed. The one of which this is a copy you never intended to send. You didn't even write it on your regular stationery, but on so-called second-page paper. Then you destroyed the original but kept this carbon copy as a piece of fake evidence."

How did the expert observer know this? By placing the carbon copy under a microscope and measuring the width of the letters with a fine instrument. If you write on a thin sheet of paper, you can get a clean-cut impression on a second sheet from the carbon. If the paper is thin enough, the impression of any letter will not be much wider than the type itself. But if typed through a thick sheet, the impression is flattened out and the letters are much wider in the copy. The width of the letters in the copy will vary, then, somewhat according to the thickness of the paper used for the original. Experiments with carbon copies printed through different kinds of paper from the man's office desks showed the facts. Osborn thus learned that a letter written on the regular stationery, ordinarily used for the man's correspondence, would have produced a different kind of impression on the copying sheet from that ac-

tually produced. It was obvious that the carbon copy in evidence could have been made only through a sheet of the thinner, second-page paper. Presumably, the man used such a sheet to avoid wasting a piece of his expensively engraved paper. His thrift on this point proved his undoing. The evidence against him was so scientifically exact that he was forced to acknowledge his original letter and live up to its promises.

Osborn long ago noticed that in books printed in England a period and a decimal point are not the same. The period is placed on the line, but the decimal point above the line. He had also observed that English accountants frequently use a decimal point for either purpose, and put their periods higher than the average person does. Having noticed all this, he tucked it away in the back of his head. Years later he could tell, after a two-minute examination, that an anonymous letter probably had been written by an English accountant. He knew this just from the periods! They were too high for American periods.

Likewise, this man once identified the writer of a forged letter by first learning that the author was probably an Italian. He had suspected this because, though the man wrote a good

hand, he made a terrible botch of the job every time he wrote a "k." There is no letter "k" in modern Italian.

"If you ever receive an anonymous letter," Osborn once said to me, "look for semicolons. If the letter contains semicolons, properly used, your search for the author of the letter is much simplified. Not one person in

a hundred knows when to use semicolons.

"Likewise," he added, "people write into their letters a thousand little items which tell much about character or identity to those who are observant.

From these examples of observation it must be evident that we see not *with* but *through* the eyes.—*Fred C. Kelly, condensed from Ken.*

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## *Six Red Roses*

IN the home of a famous man, there stands a vase which each day is filled with red roses. To that man and his family these six roses have a special significance. The roses represent six great qualities: Love, Romance, Faith, Hope, Peace of Mind, and Prosperity. These roses are a daily reminder of the ideals which create a beautiful home life. Glancing at them one is inspired to live nobly.

Flowers, it seems to me, are especially suitable as a reminder of life's higher purposes. Fresh from garden or greenhouse, they have a newness that suggests beginning again. They suggest a renewing, or our resolve, to live better lives. Their color and beauty make the qualities they symbolize highly desirable. They are like trumpets sounding from mountain tops, making us lift our eyes and march joyously along life's highway.

Why not emulate this beautiful habit in your own home? The kind of flowers doesn't matter—they may be plucked from your own garden, or sent daily from your florist. Have each flower stand for something in your home, and in the radiance of their beauty let the whole family strive toward those things.—*The Friendly Adventurer.*