

Jim Morrison Posthumously Pardoned For 1970 Convictions

Jim Morrison was unanimously pardoned of his 1970 indecent exposure and profanity convictions by the Florida Board of Executive Clemency on December 9, 2010. The pardon application was presented by Florida Governor Charlie Crist.

Morrison was convicted even though during his trial the State introduced dozens of photos taken at the March 1969 concert in Miami during which he announced he would expose himself, but none of the photos showed him exposed and no witness testified he did so.



Jim Morrison

Morrison was sentenced to six months imprisonment. Morrison died in Paris in 1971 before his appeal was decided.

There have been people advocating the pardoning of Morrison since the mid-1990s, and Crist backed pardoning Morrison because there was no evidence supporting his conviction.

Morrison's widow, Patricia Kennealy Morrison, opposed the pardon application because she said he hadn't done anything to be pardoned for. In a letter to Crist prior to the hearing she wrote that Jim Morrison "would hate, loathe, detest and despise the whole idea. He would think it is yet another pathetic attempt by the State of Florida to use him for its own cheap and cynical publicity-hungry purposes, and I have no doubt but that he would rip the 'pardon' into tiny pieces."

She said after the pardon was approved: "They should have expunged the verdict. It should have been overturned as fraud. My husband never exposed himself. There is not a single photograph showing any such thing. Of the thousands of people at that concert, who has come forward to join the one person who claims she saw him expose himself on stage? No one. Because he never did it."

Sources:

Widow of Jim Morrison - Pardon 'Meaningless'; Verdict Should Have Been Expunged, *Sunshine News*, December 9, 2010.

Widow of Jim Morrison - Pardon 'Meaningless'; Verdict Should Have Been Expunged, *Sunshine News*, December 9, 2010.

Widow of Jim Morrison - Pardon 'Meaningless'; Verdict Should Have Been Expunged, *Sunshine News*, December 9, 2010.

The Red Thumb Mark

By R. Austin Freeman

Originally published in 1907. Reprinted in 2010. 256 pages. Softcover. Fiction.

Review by Hans Sherrer

In *A Printer Looks At Fingerprints* (*Justice Denied*, Vol. 2, No. 9), Fred Woodworth mentioned a book written in 1907 that cast doubt on the reliability of using fingerprints to identify the perpetrator of a crime. However, he didn't know the title. My curiosity piqued, I did some sleuthing and was able to find the book he referred to. Imagine my surprise at finding that book, *The Red Thumb Mark*, is still in print 103 years after it was first published.

Reuben is guilty as sin! That was the police's conclusion after Scotland Yard declared Reuben Hornby's thumb-print was imprinted in blood on a paper found inside a safe burglarized of diamonds worth £30,000 (over \$250,000 in 2011 dollars). The case against Reuben seemed airtight: The safe's lock showed no signs of tampering, and only three people, including Reuben, had access to the safe.

Reuben's lawyer was so convinced of the case against him that he recommended he "plead guilty and throw himself on the clemency of the court as a first offender."

Yet if the damning evidence against him was true – why did Reuben loudly proclaim his innocence? That is the mystery that intrigued Dr. John Thorndyke enough for him to agree to investigate the case for Reuben's defense. Dr. Thorndyke was a medical doctor and a lawyer who like his

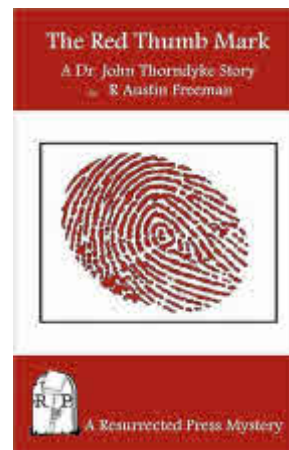
contemporary, Sherlock Holmes, used logic and deduction to solve seemingly insoluble problems.

Dr. Thorndyke began his investigation by approaching the situation from the perspective opposite of that taken by the police: Could the alleged incriminating fingerprint evidence actually prove Reuben's innocence?

During conversations with Dr. Jervis, his young assistant, Dr. Thorndyke makes many perceptive observations about the law enforcement process and his approach to a criminal case that are as relevant today as when *The Red Thumb Mark* was written more than a century ago. Three of those observations are particularly notable:

- "... the presumption of innocence is a pure fiction, the treatment of an accused man, from the moment of his arrest, is that of a criminal."
- "But there is no such thing as a single fact that 'affords evidence requiring no corroboration.' As well might one expect to make, a syllogism with a single premise."¹
- "Now the one fact which stands out and dominates the whole case is this: The prisoner's connection with this case rests solely upon the police theory of the infallibility of fingerprints."

The fruits of Dr. Thorndyke's investigation into the evidence against Reuben became public knowledge at his trial. On the most obvious level the trial testimony provides an excellent primer on why fingerprint evidence is fallible, and how easily it can be forged. While on a deeper level it demonstrates how easy it is for police and prosecutors to use



testimony related to a single supposed fact – such as a fingerprint or DNA analysis, or an eyewitnesses recollection – as the 'magic bullet' to make an accused person appear guilty. Thus a primary lesson to be learned from *The Red Thumb Mark* is that in the absence of corroborating evidence from disparate sources, a person's possible guilt must automatically be doubted.

A sub-plot that provides a bit of levity is Dr. Jervis' pining for Miss Juliet Gibson, a young woman he thinks is betrothed to Reuben, and who will marry him if he is acquitted. Dr. Jervis' desire to not do anything that even appears to compromise the honor of Miss Gibson and himself is refreshingly quaint compared to what is considered acceptable behavior in this day and age.

Is Reuben acquitted, or were Dr. Thorndyke's efforts for naught? Does Dr. Jervis get the fair maiden Miss Juliet? You'll just have to read the book to find out. *The Red Thumb Mark* is a smashing good mystery, and although it has a lot of solid information, it is a quick read since it was written for the general public and not technical readers.

The Red Thumb Mark is available for \$11 from Justice Denied's Bookshop at, www.justicedenied.org/books.htm

Endnote:

¹ Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary defines a syllogism as: 1: a deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion (as in "every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue; therefore kindness is laudable.").