

CASE VI—ASSASSINATION.

Prendergast who, at the age of 26, was executed in 1894 for the assassination of Carter H. Harrison, mayor of Chicago, was much like other regicides in his mental condition. Although coherent in patches, as Dr. H. B. Favill remarked at the trial, he could not rationally connect means with ends in his own plans. He could not perceive the inadequacy of his own abilities for his dominant purpose, which were totally out of all proportion and fitness for the end in view. Although nothing but a hired newsvender and a fanatic on the single-tax question, he demanded to be made corporation counsel to the City of Chicago, to insure certain "reforms" particularly the elevating of the railway tracks within the city. To deny his demands was, in his view, to be an enemy to the people and to God, and therefore it could be no crime to destroy the main obstacles. Like young Caserio who assassinated Carnot, President of France, he avoided female society and had neither a chum nor an accomplice of any kind. Both had much religious fervor and were absorbed in political studies which they were unfitted to grasp, and both came from well-marked neurotic stocks on their fathers' sides. Guiteau, the slayer of Garfield, had much the same erratic disposition. During Prendergast's last trial I examined him privately in the jail. He had a set countenance which was mild but immobile or stolid in expression, and unresponsive to thought change in conversation. He had occasional

twitchings of single muscles, while there was a more or less constant fine tremor of the whole face. His voice had a lack-normal element, and his pulse also betrayed a neurotic condition in its lack-tone indications, while his temperature was three-fourths of a degree above the normal. Yet his demeanor was superficially that of



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Photograph taken in the County Jail by Dr. E. S. Talbot.

quiet self-possession, and the conditions of the examination were common-place and wholly free from irritation, thus showing that his abnormal symptoms were deep-rooted and of slow growth. He had an abnormal look and a stiff bearing while he was frank, pertinent and fairly free in replying. I had no doubt of his insanity,

although I did not testify. Nor did any of the distinguished neurologists of Chicago (such as Drs. Sanger Brown, Church and Dewey) have any doubt that he was insane.

The testimony of the uninitiated in matters psychological, seems to have received the greater respect from the



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jury. Even the jail guards (who are so used to the tricks and lies of prisoners that they are prejudiced against the truth) were called to the stand to give their opinion that he was not insane as they also did in the Windrath case, a practice favored by the fact that, as Lawyer Trude remarked in behalf of the

State, the Supreme Court of the State had decided that a layman, such as a farmer, is as competent to give an opinion on an alleged case of insanity as is a physician. Such a view makes a farmer a naturalist and a star-gazer an astronomer.

Would-be regicides have usually died with conclusive evidence of insanity. Passanti who attempted to kill Humbert, King of Italy, is now in an asylum in the last stage of dementia.