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H. H. HOLMES.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAN ACCUSED OF TEN MURDERS.

A Criminologist's Study—Examination of the Prisoner's Characteristics as Revealed in an Interview—A Lesson in Degeneracy—Variations From the Normal Which Reveal the Criminal Character.

For many years I have devoted myself to a scientific and philosophical investigation of the criminal, says a writer in the New York Herald. The nineteenth century has made criminology to a certain extent a definite department of knowledge, and all men of learning agree in declaring that the cosmic, the biological and the social factors in crime are the causes wherein we may seek and find the true explanation of those abnormal members of our race, whose lives are a menace to their fellows; and as the hospital surgeon hails with professional delight the presentation to his examination of the most serious and unusual complication of injuries in one man, so the criminologists regard with an enthusiasm which horror only increases that offender who by his atrocities reveals a moral nature most diseased and monstrous. I confess then, that the personality of Holmes, the self-acknowledged criminal and suspected murderer, now imprisoned in Philadelphia, has attracted my most eager attention. His history as proven is worthy of profound interest, while the variety and number of the murders of which he is accused are such as to make him unique in our age as the possible chief of horrible assassins. His shrewd and intelligent schemes, his entire self-control, his frightful disregard of human life, which led him to extinguish the divine spark with no more show of emotion than in the puffing out of a candle's flame—these qualities, while so detestable that one cannot meditate upon them without a shudder, are yet such that the well-being of mankind demands the patient and scientific investigation of their conditions, their indices, their amelioration if not their cure and their ultimate prevention.

DIFFICULTY OF INVESTIGATING.

It was then with a sense of much satisfaction that I received from the New York Herald a request to make an investigation of Holmes' personality from the criminologist's standpoint. I entered on the task with keen interest and an appreciation of its moment, tinged only by a regret that none better fitted for the undertaking could be found. My way, however, was beset with difficulties which all the authority of a great journal could hardly overcome. To compass my ends a personal examination of the accused was indispensable. To gain it, however, I needed the consent of no less than three persons, they being Mr. Graham, the District Attorney, who, in Philadelphia, conducts the Commonwealth war against the suspected assassin; Mr. Perkins, the keeper of the prison where Holmes is confined; and, rather to my surprise, I admit, the alleged murderer himself. When I began my investigation last week I encountered such opposition in securing the consent of the first that, having gained it, I was nigh despair when the keeper informed me that the prisoner had issued a request that none be permitted to see him. I entered on a long argument with the keeper, as a result of which, from sheer weariness, perhaps, he said that he would consult with Holmes on the matter and be guided by the latter's decision. Happily the accused did not regard me as objectionable, and cordially invited my inspection. I was not permitted to enter the cell, nor was I able to make certain measurements of value, but the grating of the door allowed me to study very satisfactorily the details of my subject's physique, while the freedom of our conversation was such that I could inquire systematically concerning all those characteristics which criminologists consider vital. I shall not report here the conversation, but I shall refer to it and quote from it as may be necessary in my examination of the accused's traits, for the prosecution of which I have employed not only his own statements, and my personal inspection, but also a great bulk of matter bearing on his individuality which I have gathered from all those who are best fitted to know the man in his criminal, social and domestic life.

It may be stated at the outset that Holmes does not possess in any marked degree those apparent physical peculiarities which are popularly connected with

criminality. His head is seemingly well shaped, his countenance open and pleasing, his eyes gentle and meeting one's gaze fairly, his ears, nose, mouth, chin and figure in no wise singular. In fine he is a man whom you would pass and re-pass in the street without especial attention, and one who in casual conversation would impress you favourably rather than otherwise. He has none of those external deformities such as Homer attributed to the evil Thersites, of pointed head and general ugliness; indeed, a professor of physiognomy would be likely to describe him as a young man of mild and gentle disposition. Criminology, however, probes in every direction for indications of moral disease, and regards the external as only one constituent part in the revelation, not its entirety.

HOLMES' SKULL.

Concerning the cranial and cerebral characteristics, an examination at once shows that Holmes possesses neither the oxycephalic nor its opposite, the flat-roofed skull distinctly, both of which are common among criminals. The skull recedes somewhat from the brows, however, and the crown of the head is almost a straight line to the point of descent, while a careful inspection reveals the fact that the general contour is angular rather than round, but this, while a departure from the normal, is not of great significance in itself. Tenchini asserts that the frontal crest is often prominent in criminals, and this is verified by other investigators; but such prominence is not found in the case of Holmes. In general configuration the shape of the head closely follows that of those given by Dr. Vans Clarke in his sketches of criminals. On the other hand, such a type is also found among the non-criminal, and only becomes significant when joined with other like characteristics as a species of cumulative proof.

Criminology has discovered that those who are guilty of deeds of violence more commonly have a remarkably well developed lower jaw, to such an extent that its undue size is at once apparent to the ordinary observer. Experiment on dead criminals has demonstrated that while the average weight of the lower jaw is 80 grammes, in murderers it is nearly 94. The receding chin is common among the petty thieves and rascals, and a light lower jaw is frequent among the insane. Instances in the other direction do, however, occur. Holmes' lower jaw is not light, but the chin recedes, and it is, therefore, to a limited degree abnormal, with an indication of possible insanity rather than excessive violence. Weakness is not shown by it.

AS HE LOOKS IN THE PRISON.

When I saw Holmes the restraints of prison had had their effect, which showed in his sunken cheeks, but in spite of the prominence of the cheek bones which resulted they were not such as to make one think him one likely to be dominated by sexual impulses, which have been found to be the case in criminals with conspicuous zygoma.

As to the teeth, I found that they are crowded, and slightly overlapping from above. This is obviously abnormal, and all physical departure from the normal, as Nordau points out, is a symptom of degeneracy. Yet no scientific classification of criminals has yet been made, and I do not desire now to give the results of my own studies.

All the authorities unite in giving to a majority of criminals large or projecting ears. Holmes' ears are noticeably long, although not projecting, and their shape is of the sort condemned by Lombroso as "ad ansa." Of itself it is important as an index of character, which is seldom at fault, although this abnormal formation is found often among ordinary persons in whom other qualities were in the ascendant, but in whom we must believe peculiar tendencies toward evil existed.

Holmes' nose is of a type so common that it can scarcely be considered as an indication of his character. Ottolenghi states that the criminal's nose is more often rectilinear, rarely undulating with horizontal base, neither long nor short and rather large. This would not describe Holmes' nose. On the other hand, a careful study of outline plates of criminals' heads will reveal a type of nose similar to Holmes' of great frequency. It would be unjust, however, to place much dependence upon any conclusion drawn from this, in view of the probability that a like study of non-criminals' heads would reveal a like preponderance of the Holmes type.

When I saw Holmes in his cell the pallor of his skin was remarkable, but he was of good complexion when arrested, and the affirmations of Polemon, L'inguegni, and the moderns, that a pallid skin is characteristic of criminals, is in Holmes' favour. The same may be said also of the wrinkles in his face, which are not, and especially were not, at the time of his arrest, such as to be considered abnormal. Criminologists have agreed, however, that wrinkles are earlier and more abundant in the criminal than in the non-criminal.

CRIMINALITY IN THE HAIR.

Dark hair is the more common among criminals, and dark, almost black, is the colour of Holmes' hair and beard. Scanty beard and luxuriant hair are often asserted to be characteristic of criminals, but Holmes has scanty hair and a heavy beard. I do not from my own investigation, however, agree with my fellows in criminology.

On the contrary, I believe that the man who follows such a life of scheming as Holmes has led will have a strong tendency towards baldness, while heaviness of beard is a result of race and climatic conditions. My own opinion, justified by extended researches, is that Holmes' hair and beard are what might properly be expected, whether he be merely the bold swindler, or, in addition, the calculating murderer. Among the insane baldness is frequent, and yet the whole result of criminology is the demonstration of the fact that crime is the result of diseased conditions, abnormal developments—in other words, unsoundness, which is the exact synonyme of insanity. Why, then, should not the criminal be marked by the same scarcity of hair which is frequent among the insane, when their crime is not the result of passion but the consequence of systematic and deliberate mental schemes, from a contemplation of which the sound mind, as well as the sound heart, would recoil in horror? All agree in giving to criminals an unusual amount of hair upon other parts of the body, and in this respect Holmes is remarkable, as his hands display a thick growth.

It may be added that the proportion of those having dark hair among the insane is ten out of every twelve.

HIS GENTLE EYES.

Of Holmes' eyes I observed that they possess that orbital prominence which Lombroso condemns, emphasized by the arches and frontal sinuses. The eyes are not deep set to any noticeable extent, and their glance is clear, gentle and pleasant. There is none of that hardness which is common in the gaze of criminals. It would be of great interest to observe them when the accused should be putting forth an effort of strength. Lombroso asserts that in his tests, made in that manner on criminals, the eyes of the murderers never failed to show that gleam which burns in the eyes of the beast watching its prey while crouching for the spring, or afterward in the ferocious struggle. Lombroso also declares that this feline and cruel look alternates often with one of almost womanly softness. The latter is that which I found in Holmes' eyes. Whether occasion could change that gentleness to cruelty I had no opportunity to determine.

Holmes' worst feature is his mouth, which is disfigured by a heavy and hanging under lip, the significance of which all men know.

Passing to a review of other essentials, in a thorough study of the man Holmes, I found that his arms were long, rather than short, which is usually the case among criminals. It is worthy of particular attention that criminals as a rule are feeble in the muscular development. They are capable of great effort and extraordinary liveliness, yet lacking in certain physical requirements and their activities are always intermittent. Investigations in the Elmira reformatory prove that the chief physical deficiency is in the respiratory apparatus, and about half of the total of deaths were the result of pulmonary diseases. Holmes is hollow chested and rather round-shouldered. Indeed, his sunken breast, joined to his thinness and pallor, as I saw him in the prison gave him a consumptive appearance, although he is not tainted by disease. He does not show any physique which would be likely to endure protracted strain. In my investigation of his past life I was baffled. On one hand I found evidence that he indulged in long periods of rest; on the other I was assured that he was a ceaseless toiler. My own opinion, drawn from his appearance, is that he must have indulged in frequent pauses for rest from the fatigues incident to his enervating plots.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CRIMINALS.

No one peculiarity of criminals has attracted the notice of scientific investigators more than the physical insensibility to pain in which they often closely resemble idiots. Lombroso insists upon the importance of this characteristic, and with much justice, since it forcibly illustrates the abnormal condition of the offender. Criminals submit to the painful process of tattooing more frequently than the savages who are trained to it, although latterly its usefulness as a means of identification has made the more intelligent than it. One whom Lombroso considered a typical criminal was without perception of pain when pricked by a needle, and similar tests with the electric current has shown like insensibility—a matter which is of vast importance in the consideration of electrocution. It is by an appreciation of this quality in offenders that we come to understand their cool behaviour on the eve of execution, and at other times when their predicament is such that the normal mind is amazed at the indifference of the person most concerned. The same characteristic is shown in another fashion by the criminal's abnormally speedy recovery from wounds and injuries in general. In the case of Holmes I was only able to question but the result was notable. I learned from him that he was once severely injured on the head by a brick, but to the amazement of his physician he retained his consciousness. In addition, for a considerable length of time he remained awake, stubbornly refusing to receive the quiet of slumber, as he himself says, lest while he slept delirium should unlock his lips, and he should chatter of his secret schemes. Such self-control exerted upon

(Continued on Page 5.)

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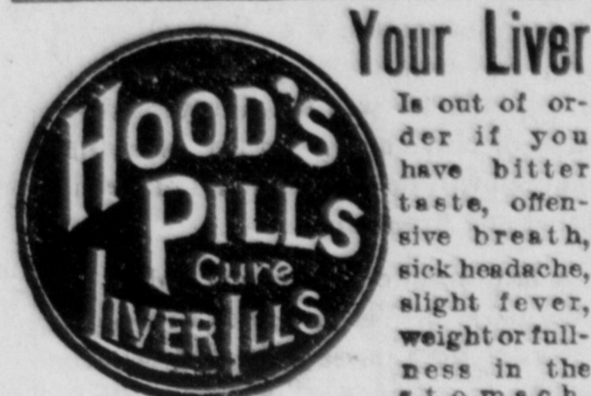
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