

The Anarchist

Preface

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Tuesday, October 29, 1901

I did not want to be there, not for a minute. But Dr. Gerin had insisted it was part of my training and he and I had been the first to arrive. Empty, the room had seemed a grim place, with a palpable presence of death. That feeling was now masked by the slight activity of the couple dozen men who had filled it. Jonesy stood stoically by my side, his light-hearted persona for the moment obscured. Nearby, a man fiddled with his watch, taking it out of the pocket of

his waistcoat, giving it a slight twirl, and putting it back. Closer to the door, another played with the thick curve of his waxed moustache. By the far wall, two men spoke in hushed tones. The last to enter had been the chaplain whose ministries had been repeatedly rejected over the preceding weeks. Even so, his faith insisted on the value of his silent prayers. Only Dr. Gerin, my mentor, seemed fully engaged in the event at hand. He stood poised by the door in anticipation.

Jones placed a hand reassuringly on my shoulder.

“Parker, you’re trembling,” he whispered.

I mustered a grim smile across my clenched teeth and nodded in agreement.

A moment later, the steel door swung open and Warden Mead walked quickly in followed by Collins, the Superintendent of Prisons. Collins surveyed the room, gauging the mood of those present. He instructed us to stay in our places and trust everything to the hands of the officials. Around the chamber, heads bobbed uneasily in assent.

Collins turned back to the open doorway and beckoned to those waiting unseen in the long, dimly-lit corridor beyond. Two guards entered, tough old Tupper, the Principal Keeper, and a younger man whom I didn't recognize. Between them, they half led, half dragged Leon into the room. Two more guards followed behind. They pushed the prisoner roughly into the waiting chair, his head thrown against the seat back with an audible thud.

Leon's gaze scanned the room, sad and defiant as if attempting to register his presence in the minds of the strangers who had been called together as his final witnesses. Finally, his eyes found my own and locked onto them as if they were the one island in a perilous sea. The look could not have held for more than a moment, but it spoke loudly, as if to say "remember me and the deed I have done." I could feel the perspiration beading up on my forehead, the tension churning in my stomach. Meanwhile, the guards methodically tightened the thick, leather straps around his arms, legs, and chest as if he were little more than a parcel being secured for transport. The rubbing of the leather against the wooden chair and the clink of the

metal clasps as they were firmly fastened echoed loudly in the surrounding silence. My pulse pounded in my ears. My vision blurred, only to be pulled back into focus as the Superintendent finally approached the prisoner.

Chapter One



Saturday, September 7, 1901

Few of us see our lives as a part of history. For most, history is something we were forced to study in school in a bleary-eyed recitation of dates, names, and places. Some say they are “bored to death” by it, ironically failing to recognize that it is usually only in dying that one can transcend the study of history and become a part of its content. A few were, and remain, enthralled by its twists and turns, its powers and personalities, and its seemingly endless depth of detail. We are taught that history happened long ago, probably before we were born, and that it happened to someone else. It is a foreign land, the home

of heroes, the abode of an Alexander, a Caesar, a Lincoln. Ordinary people are rarely the subject of history and thus we give little thought to how it carries along and shapes our own lives. Even less do we comprehend how our own actions, however insignificant they may seem, are shaping the course of historic events. It is as if we were on a different plane, witnessing history's unfolding but with no recourse to the provinces of the great. Still, some come to see themselves and history differently. A McKinley or a Roosevelt perhaps views history as a mountain to be climbed, much like Teddy's own fabled charge up San Juan Hill. They seek above all else to erect a monument on that mountain top where future generations will see their mark. And then there is Leon. Did he assert himself onto a field for which he was never born, or did he stumble, madly perhaps, into infamy? Certainly, a place in history was never his conscious goal. As for myself, I know all too well how history lifted me up for that brief, private moment, shook me firmly, and set me down a new man.

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September 7, 1901, was one of those bleak days I grew to expect in Auburn--overcast and dreary. I almost wished it would rain just to break the monotony. The low cloud cover obscured the otherwise bright, lush hills, and the sweet, clear streams that ran down to the shores of Lake Owasco. In upstate New York, the first week of September holds many a magnificent day. This was not among them.

Like the day, I brooded. All morning I'd sat silently and stared out the window of the room our landlady, Mrs. Thomas, had agreed would serve as a study when Jones and I each rented a bedroom for the semester. The gray clouds exhausted my attention much as they seemed to drain the color from the green leaves and late summer flowers. The psychology text I'd opened dutifully at dawn, now, at mid-morning, rested ponderously on my lap, little more than a prop in a tableau of tedium, its pages curling in the late summer humidity. William James' *Principles of Psychology* (even this abridged version we called the "Jimmy" as contrasted with the truly massive "James") was a volume of great weight, in both senses of the word. My eyes had glazed over and I had lost my focus mid-way through James'

discussion of will: "If we believe that the end is in our power, we *will* that the desired feeling, having or doing shall be real, and real it presently becomes."

Even my usually coveted cup of morning coffee sat on the small wooden table by my side half empty, a swirl of brown coagulation forming across the top. My thoughts were too unfocused, too dim and diffuse, to leave any lasting impression. For the past few months I had felt like someone waking from a long, unplanned nap. Previously, I had sailed through college and the first few years of medical school, happy to hold to the course my father had set for me. Now, with another graduation looming ahead the coming spring, the question was taking shape as to just what my life would ultimately be about. It was a question I was not quite ready to ask and certainly not prepared to answer. Perhaps, as the eminent psychologist maintained, it was a matter of gathering my will to break loose from this sluggish stream of consciousness.

My reverie was jarred a bit by the sight of Ezzie coming into view. She slunk low along the fence, stalking some unseen prey. I could spend hours watching Mrs. T's cat,

self-declared mistress of the household. A cuddly if demanding purr-pillow when indoors, she transformed herself into a fierce huntress once outside. It was the outdoor beast that most entranced me--the infinite patience, the perfect concentration, her full being gathered for a single strike and, often failing in the attempt, her contentment at beginning all over again. I envied those few people whom I imagined might share those qualities, ones I saw dismally lacking in myself. In my more philosophical moments I compared Ezzie's twin abilities to relax and focus with my inability to attain either state in the last year of medical school. A tense malaise had definitely been my lot during the past months.

Ezzie now zeroed in on her target. She crouched low on her haunches mapping her strike. Somehow feeding on her liveliness, my tired brain perked up a notch and I picked up the nearby cup, oblivious to its now somewhat disagreeable contents, and slowly lifted it toward my lips. At that moment, Ezzie leaped forward with a shrill feline war-cry, the study door burst open without warning, and I, turning one way and then the other, wound up with tepid

coffee covering my shirt and dripping down onto the textbook.

“Oh dear,” said a flustered Mrs. Thomas. She pulled the ever-present rag from her apron waist band and began to wiping up the coffee. “Mr. Parker, I’m so sorry. I wanted to make sure you’d heard the news.”

I rubbed my sleeve hard against the wet pages hoping to prevent a stain from marring the book. “As far as I’m concerned, the big news here is that I’m soaking wet.”

“It’s the President. He’s been shot.”

I was speechless for a moment while it sunk in.

“President McKinley?” This news was unbelievable. “Who would do such a thing? McKinley’s been in Buffalo, hasn’t he? At the Exposition?”

“He was in Buffalo, but that’s all I know. Mrs. Casey who told me didn’t know any details. That’s why I thought you might run downtown and bring back some news.”

“What about Jones? Is he still here?”

“No, your friend went out around an hour ago. I was straightening up his room when Mrs. Casey came by.”

I was more than ready to go out in search of the latest information. I grabbed the textbook under my arm and ran up the stairs two at a time to my room. My head spun with wild speculation over Mrs. T's news. Who could have done such a deed? Was McKinley still alive? If not, what kind of president would Roosevelt make? What if a foreign power was behind the assassination? Could it mean another war? My excitement was boosted by the relief of leaving my studies behind. The spell cast by the gloomy weather was broken, and, after setting the "Jimmy" out to dry and putting on a clean shirt, I left the boarding house and walked at a brisk pace down North Street toward town.

As I turned up Genesee Street, I saw the familiar lanky form of Jones up ahead. "Jonesy!" I called out. "Wait for me."

He turned and, seeing me down the street, stopped to wait. I quickened my pace. A newspaper boy hawking the latest edition called out for my attention.

"President shot in Buffalo! Read all about it!"

I was about to stop to purchase a copy, but Jones waved his arms to show me that he already held a paper in his hands. A moment later I was at his side.

“I see you’ve heard about the assassination,” I said. Before my friend could reply, I grabbed the paper from his hands. In the largest typeface I’d ever seen, the headline blared out, “McKinley Twice Shot By Assassin.” The subhead read, “Dastardly Attempt on Life of the President at Buffalo.”

“This is incredible,” I said, momentarily mesmerized by the headlines. I started to skim through the lead article. Jones interrupted before I could get far.

“Come on, there’ll be time for that. Let’s go over to O’Malley’s and see if anyone’s heard more since the paper came out.”

“Just a moment...” I’d reached the section discussing the would-be assassin and had to know something about the man who could do such a deed. “My God, it’s an anarchist! Another Bresci.”

“So they say. I’d hoped regicide was one fashion that we’d leave to the Europeans.”

In the couple of minutes it took to reach the saloon, Jonesy began to fill me in on the few details he'd learned. The President had been shot late in the afternoon the previous day. He was shot twice and rushed away for treatment. Not much was known yet about his condition, but there was hope that he would survive. The assassin, a solitary gunman, had been immediately apprehended and was in the Buffalo jail. Vice-president Roosevelt was returning from a hunting trip in the Adirondacks.

"Do you think he's sane?" Jonesy asked after he'd laid out what he knew.

"Who, TR?" I grinned.

"Not Roosevelt!" Jones punched my arm. "The assassin."

"Would-be assassin, you mean. Don't really have anything to go on, of course. Maybe he is. Maybe not. If you'd let me finish the article, I might have something on which to base an opinion. Have you heard anything besides what's in the paper?"

"No, that's it. But there's got to be more news since it rolled off the press. If only we were back in New York.

Then we'd get all the news right away." O'Malley's appeared just ahead, it's familiar wooden sign swinging in the breeze.

O'Malley's saloon was a discovery I had shared with Jones shortly after we arrived to begin our internship. In our first weeks in Auburn, we'd learned that it was a place where we could count on finding a diverse cross-section of townfolk congregating. Cheap food and liquor as well as Dan O'Malley's own gregarious nature encouraged the patrons to freely discuss, debate, shout, lampoon, and generally debauch. No topic was too sacred or too profane for the crowd at O'Malley's. At first, this all-purpose bar-restaurant-gathering place had been a shock to my citified sensibilities. I was accustomed to restaurants where you could dine comfortably while the hum of neighboring conversation stayed politely in the background, and to taverns which, if noisy, nonetheless maintained a certain decorum. There was no lack of these more sedate establishments in Auburn, notably the dining rooms at the Osborne House and the Empire State Hotel. Not that there

weren't quiet times at O'Malley's--if you wanted to eat at 2 or 3 in the afternoon, that is.

But the first time I had encountered O'Malley's, only two weeks earlier, it was just about high noon. After less than a week in Auburn, I was already tired of Mrs. T's bland cooking. Despite the fact that her meals were prepaid for the semester, I found myself desperate to vary my diet. I told her I was going for a mid-day jaunt through town and wondered where I might get a bite to eat. Mrs. Thomas looked up from her mending.

"Why don't I pack a sandwich for you?" Her reply was less a question than a proclamation. For her, frugality was the highest virtue.

"Thanks, but I think I'd like to eat out today. Part of exploring a new place is sampling the local cuisine."

"Well, you know I don't get out much, what with cooking every day for my boarders." Mrs T sighed, resigning herself to my intentions. "On your budget you might try O'Malley's. I know his wife who says he serves a nice, hot meal. You'd better stay away from the liquor though."

She laughed when I asked for directions. “You’re not in New York anymore. This is Auburn, son. Just walk down Genesee Street. You can’t miss it.”

She was right. I strolled past the compact group of shops that occupied the ground floors of the two and three-story brick buildings that defined downtown Auburn. Scanning the brightly striped awnings and storefronts for my destination, I soon spied a lightly-stained wooden shingle swinging in the breeze with “Tavern” painted on it. Curving across the window in ornate etched letters was the single word “O’Malley’s.”

An envelope of noise surrounded the small clapboard building, emerging through the broken screen door that stood propped open in front. I stepped just across the threshold and struggled to orient myself. The scene was like a bizarre cross between a family reunion and an open-air market. I stood by the door for a minute trying to get a sense of the layout of the establishment and the decorum of its patrons. Laughter and conversation flew back and forth across the room. An old fellow at one end of the bar thought nothing of raising his voice to be heard by a man

seated at the far corner table. Getting my bearings at last, I wove my way through a maze of ragtag tables and chairs to find an open space at the bar.

The beefy, powerfully-built, be-jowled fellow behind the bar, Dan O'Malley himself I soon learned, caught my eye. He looked like he'd been eating too much of his own cooking. "What'll it be, son?"

"What are the choices?" I replied warily.

"Food or drink?" O'Malley wiped his thick hands on a stained white apron.

"I'm hoping for lunch."

"Today I've got a thick beef stew with lots of potatoes. The bread is fresh yesterday. Guaranteed to fill you up and get you through the day." O'Malley spoke with just a hint of a soft brogue that indicated that his parents were probably Irish immigrants. A middle-aged man, a couple of decades in Auburn had made him sound like one of those second-generation Americans, their voices like old seashells, eroded practically smooth, with only a hint of contour and texture remaining to indicate the nature of the creature

that had cast it off. That his proffered fare would fill me up, I could believe.

A savory aroma of stew wafted through the room. "All right," I said.

O'Malley served up a big bowl of stew and a thick piece of brown bread. "Two bits," he announced, handing me a spoon. I gave him a quarter and headed to an empty table near the fireplace at the far side of the bar. My lips puckered in enjoyment of the pungent stew, a nice change of pace from to Mrs. T's usually dull fare. The bread, a bit hard around the edges, succumbed readily to the hot broth of the stew.

I ate quickly, all the while fidgeting in my chair, my social discomfort translated into a physical unease. The chair itself, a well-worn straight-back, was fine. Given the saloon's evident lack of social boundaries, I could not help listening in on the conversation. Someone had recently returned from the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and the bar-room discussion revolved around that prominent event.

“The kids just loved it,” he was saying, “The boat ride through the canals was great fun. Tom and Bobby were crazy for the Trip to the Moon. Oh, and the African Village. What an elaborate affair that is. They’ve got nearly 100 natives from a dozen tribes. They do all their dances and show off their crafts. They were weaving cloth and carving ivory. The boys really liked seeing the weapons--spears, axes, swords--and the musical instruments, all kinds of whistles, horns, and bells. They got a real kick out of some of the tribal names, Bojokwe, Baluba, real strange sounding names. They’d like nothing better than to go back for another visit.”

“The Exposition’s been great for me, too, “ called out a thin man at the bar. “My boys are working extra hard getting the apples in. I told them if we had a big enough harvest, we could go to Buffalo. Can’t really afford it, of course, but it’s not the kind of event that’s likely to come our way again any time soon. Something to tell the grandchildren about.”

“Well you’d better not wait too long,” the first fellow said. “The whole business is scheduled to shut down

November 2nd, and, I'll tell you, some of those big, fancy, make-shift buildings look like they're about to blow away any day now."

I sat in my corner with my meal, not saying anything, not feeling ready or able to break into the camaraderie. The discussion of the tribal displays struck me as somewhat sordid. I'd read the debates surrounding Rudyard Kipling's poem, *The White Man's Burden*, and agreed with those who thought it reflected an attitude comparable to that of the defenders of slavery a half century earlier. Much as I believed in the progress represented by European and American civilization, there seemed to be a fine line separating paternalistic good will from an overweening arrogance. Too many slipped all too easily across that line.

"And the lights!" the speaker continued. "You wouldn't believe all the lights." The Exposition was, if nothing else, a celebration of the work of Thomas Edison. It blazed at night with electric bulbs that covered most buildings from foundation to rooftop. It was an awesome sight to these country folk. As the fair's designers intended, they saw in the brilliant display the bright promise of the

dawning twentieth century. It was all of a piece: the genius of Edison, the greatness of the U.S. of A., and the hope for a prosperous future.

“I don’t know,” O’Malley chimed in. “They’re pretty but these gas lights still serve us fine.”

An older man, seated at the end of the bar, looking as if he might have long ago retired permanently to his stool, called out “What about the newcomer? You been to Buffalo?”

I realized he meant me and, choking down a mouthful of stew, answered “No, I’m too busy with school. Couldn’t really afford the trip right now anyway.”

“School?” came the incredulous answer, “what kind of school is there for a man your age in these parts?”

“Medical school,” I replied. “The school is in New York. I’m just here for the fall, studying with Doctor Gerin at the prison.”

“You’ll find plenty of rot to examine there. You studying to be a prison doc?”

“No, actually, an alienist.”

“Hah!” he laughed. “If it’s crazy folks that interest you, then you’d best do your studying right here at O’Malley’s!”

And indeed I did. I soon became a regular member of the boisterous crowd that somewhat affectionately, I suppose, had christened me “Doc.” In the few weeks since that day, I’d come to know them well.

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As Jones and I walked into the saloon, a few of the regulars looked up and smiled or waved. The booming voice of Joe Whelan held the floor.

“It’s just a matter of the chickens coming home to roost. Think of the strikers who’ve been gunned down. The workers beaten and overworked, impoverished.” Whelan was a short man, built thick and strong, a strength honed in his demanding work assembling farm equipment at D.M. Osborne and Company. In the days since I’d first encountered him here at the saloon, I’d been impressed with the vehemence of his political opinions as well as with his ability to articulate them.

“But Joe,” interrupted Jed Grant, the man who’d given me my nickname, “this is murder, pure and simple. The

motive seems to be political, but it could just be the act of a mad man.”

“That’s something I’ve been wondering about,” O’Malley’s voice, as always, held sway in his own establishment. “What kind of a man walks calmly up and shoots another in a crowded building with no concern for his own escape or safety. That sounds pretty crazy to me. I’d like to hear what the young alienist thinks.” All eyes turned in my direction.

“Well, I can’t think anything until I know the details. Jonesy wouldn’t even let me finish the paper he was in such a hurry to get down here. Someone fill me in.”

“We don’t know much.” O’Malley held the floor. “Seems that the President held a receiving line yesterday afternoon in the Temple of Music at the Exposition. A young man, some foreign name no one can seem to pronounce, something like Ksollgawz, came up with his hand wrapped in a handkerchief, like it was injured, but really hiding a gun, and shot McKinley twice at point blank range. The police wrestled this fellow Ksollgawz to the

ground. He's in custody. The President's in critical condition, but the doctors are optimistic."

"I guess that's pretty much what the morning paper said," I replied. "Let me see how that name is spelled." Jones handed me back the paper. "I'm pretty sure that C-z-o-l-g-o-s-z would be pronounced Chollgosh. I've been exposed to enough Polish names in New York to know that the 'cz' is pronounced as 'ch' and the 'sz' as 'sh.' What else do we know about him?"

"Not much. As far as we've heard, he hasn't said much. Like you say, he's a Polack. Twenty-eight. Pretty nervous, according to the papers. But who wouldn't be? They found an article about Emma Goldman, the anarchist, in his pocket. Maybe she's linked to the crime. Some kind of conspiracy, maybe. But no one really knows. There was a fellow ahead of him in the receiving line who created a disturbance. An Italian. Might be an accomplice. Some think it makes sense given that Bresci was Italian, but so is my neighbor, Mike Anton. The assassin claims he acted alone. So, what do you think?"

I paused for a moment to ponder this question, well aware of the absurdity of their expecting some worthwhile opinion on the basis of such scant information. The others waited in anticipation, a rare moment of silence overtaking O'Malley's. I decided that only the broadest of comments would be appropriate and finally replied, "These are questions that alienists, and ethicists, continue to grapple with. Can a murderer ever be sane? Is it a form of insanity to believe in anarchy?"

"Just a minute." It was Whelan again. "The anarchists want to build a new society, one without bosses or governments, without injustice. You can't call that crazy."

"Well, Joe, many people do call them that. Remember that insanity is not a term with a scientifically precise definition. Legally, it means little more than unsoundness of mind. As far as the purported goals of the anarchists are concerned, idealism is not necessarily inconsistent with delusion. But, more importantly, what of their methods? It is certainly diabolical, if not outright insane, to advocate murder as a political tactic."

Jones piped in, "But what was the Spanish-American War if not the practice of murder as a political tactic."

"Why Jonesy, you're sounding like a socialist." I smiled, knowing he was playing devil's advocate.

"He sure is," said O'Malley whose nephew was a war veteran. "McKinley won that war for the American people and to free the people of Cuba and the Philippines from Spanish domination. We ought not to malign the President's work while he's lying in Buffalo, maybe on his death bed."

"Okay," I nodded in acknowledgment of O'Malley's patriotism. "So, the anarchists want to put an end to government. Let's set aside for the moment the question of whether or not that idea, in and of itself, constitutes insanity. Their method, or at least one of their methods, I don't know too much about them myself, is to kill heads of state, like Bresci's assassination of King Humbert over in Italy. If this Czolgosz is just a foot soldier following the program, you can't say on that basis alone that he's insane. You would need more information. Of course, you can't necessarily say he's sane either."

“But, Doc,” Mike Johnson, an O’Malley’s regular entered the discussion, “you work with murderers every day in the prison. Do you think they’re all insane?”

“Don’t forget that this is only my second week working with Dr. Gerin. And, giving someone a medical exam is not the same as giving him a psychiatric evaluation. But there are different kinds of murderers with different motives, different personalities, and different circumstances. The law considers most of them sane. A crime of passion is considered to be a momentary lapse for an otherwise sane individual.”

“Kind of like the day I slipped up and ate some of O’Malley’s cooking,” Jed Grant suggested with a loud guffaw.

Jones rolled his eyes in amusement. “That would be a lapse in judgment,” I corrected. “As well as he feeds us, I haven’t witnessed much passion for O’Malley’s cuisine. Anyway, as I was saying, a deranged criminal who murders as a result of his psychosis is considered insane and not responsible for his act. And then there’s the cold, methodical murderer, the hired gun, someone whose crime

is part of the functional adaptation of his life. This is where the question of ethics comes in. The law considers crime to fall on an ethical spectrum of good and evil. The sanity of the perpetrator comes into play only in extreme cases in which it can be demonstrated that the criminal did not know right from wrong. Some of the states broaden the definition to include cases in which the impulse to commit the crime is beyond the control of the perpetrator, even though he knows it is wrong. We don't know yet whether the assassin committed a crime of passion, if he is deranged, or if he is a cold-blooded killer. Yet one has to wonder about a society that can consider any murder to be the act of a sane man."

The crowd seemed satisfied with this analysis and turned its attention to some other item in the newspaper. I felt pleased with myself and with my performance. Smiling with satisfaction, I ordered a beer from O'Malley, which I proceeded to sip slowly, leaving the discussion of the assassination to others. For the first time I realized that I was saddened by the possibility of McKinley's death. I had tremendous respect for this national leader who had

spurred on the great engine of progress and made the United States a world power. His initial presidential campaign, back in my college days, had offered me a first serious exposure to American politics. Although few of my classmates at Cornell had attained voting age, political debates had raged across campus in '96. Most of the students were, like their parents, staunch McKinley supporters. Few had encountered the kind of life experiences or influences that might have altered their views. McKinley's call for "peace, progress, patriotism, and prosperity" struck them as plainly sensible.

The handful of William Jennings Bryan fans were enthusiastic and boisterous. They had picked up the populist rhetoric that surrounded Bryan and worked hard toward his election. They spoke eloquently on behalf of a Common Man whom none of them had likely met. Although I myself preferred McKinley, I could not deny that there was a certain common sense to Bryan's call for reform. Surely a great democracy like the United States should seek to ensure a fair livelihood for the agrarian yeoman and the industrial laborer, lifting the hardworking

masses out of poverty. But Bryan's public image both attracted and repelled me. His legendary rhetorical skills were fascinating, but I was put off by the common portrayal of his following as an unruly and uneducated rabble.

Students had packed the auditorium in Sage Chapel for the great face-off between our two debating society champions, Calvin Simmons, representing McKinley, and William Dawson for Bryan. Bryan supporters cheered loudly, believing they had won the day, as Dawson closed with the Democrat's celebrated declamation "you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." But Simmons proved himself a superior orator to even McKinley, replying smoothly "and you, my sanctimonious adversary, shall not crucify him upon a cross of grime!" I joined the rest of the Republican camp in a roar of triumph at this zinger, approving of Simmons' ad hominem reference to Bryan's lower class supporters. Among Cornell students, at least, McKinley was still the frontrunner.

Two years later, like most of my classmates, I was caught up in the call for Cuban independence. A few diehard socialists claimed that the United States was only

concerned with expanding its economic sphere of influence, but their voices were drowned out by those who saw our nation as the bastion and sustainer of expanding global democracy. When spring classes ended, I watched with envy those fellows who forsook their summer holiday to enlist for the great escapade in Cuba. But they were not among those fated to return with tales of adventure at El Canay, Santiago, or San Juan Hill. Most of these late recruits, gentlemen adventurers as they were, achieved only the dubious heroics of marching around a muddy field in Virginia for a few weeks before they were discharged and sent home. In mid-July, the Spanish government was already petitioning for peace.

McKinley had made the United States a world power and Theodore Roosevelt had fashioned himself into a national model of rugged American manhood and patriotism. I basked in the pride of my country, my era, and my generation. In 1900, I held my head high as I marched to the polling place to cast my very first vote for the McKinley-Roosevelt ticket. A few of my fellow students were involved in the recently formed Anti-Imperialist

League, railing against militarism and conquest, but I had no patience for them. The demands of medical school left little time for the great political questions of the day.

“Politics” was not a term found in the index of Gray’s Anatomy.

Back at the boarding house that evening, I reflected on the turn the discussion at O’Malley’s had taken. I enjoyed the aura of authority that the barroom crowd invested in me. Medical school was characterized by an overwhelming sense of how little you knew, how much there was to learn. The physicians who served as our instructors were formidable in their command of medicine and intimidating in their demeanor. I looked forward to graduation when I could formally claim to have joined their ranks. For now, my occasional pronouncements at O’Malley’s must suffice as my meager reward. Only Jonesy’s mocking smile insistently reminded me that my expertise extended only as far as the saloon’s front door.

The questions raised about McKinley’s assassin and about the relationship of insanity to criminality were the very ones that had been on my mind in recent months, and

which led me to seek out an internship at Auburn State Prison. Much as I thrilled to serve as expert to the barroom crowd, I felt frustrated, unable to meet my own standards for a satisfactory understanding. And I was not at all convinced that the answers would ultimately be found in texts like the Jimmy that lay waiting for me nearby, an indifferent Ezzie-cat napping contentedly upon its coffee-stained pages. Psychiatry treated each individual as if the dimensions of sanity and madness were totally encapsulated in one's own personality, revealed in one's upbringing and life experiences, if not in one's physiognomy. Emil Kraepelin's acclaimed taxonomy of psychiatric disease patterns was entirely individualistic. Whether a patient was diagnosed with catatonia or febrile deliria, hebephrenia or general paresis was based almost exclusively on the physician's observations at the bedside.

Yet the thought gnawed at me that society itself might exist in a range of, if not psychological, at least ethical or moral health, and that our actions might in the final analysis be properly evaluated only within that framework. Were we not all positioned somewhere on a continuum of

mental fitness, our sanity judged in the context of our social conditions and in our response to the expectations of others? What really separated the criminal from the criminally insane, the troubled man whose knife was grasped only by his imagination from the murderer who struck in earnest? That night, such questions still danced in my head as I lay in bed drifting off to sleep; McKinley and his assailant, this Czolgosz, slowly receded from my consciousness.

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