



## HOW BURNS CAUGHT THE DYNAMITERS

THE GREAT DETECTIVE REVIEWS THE  
McNAMARA CASE FROM THE FIRST  
CLUE TO THE CONFESSION

**W**ILLIAM J. BURNS, another of whose cases is printed in this month's McCLURE's, was recently called by the New York *Times* "the greatest detective certainly, and perhaps the only really great detective, the only detective of genius, whom this country has produced." This characterization was inspired by the confession, on the first of December, of James B. McNamara, that he had been guilty of dynamiting the building of the Los

Angeles *Times* and killing twenty-one men. The admission, by McNamara, that Burns' evidence against him was so complete that it was useless for him to put in any defense was unquestionably the greatest triumph in Mr. Burns' whole career. It was a fitting culmination to the other cases which had already made Mr. Burns famous, and which he has described in recent numbers of McCLURE'S MAGAZINE. Ex-President Roosevelt voiced the general sentiment when he telegraphed to Mr. Burns, after McNamara had pleaded guilty in the Los

Angeles case: "All good American citizens feel that they owe you a debt of gratitude for your signal service to American citizenship."

### *A Great Vindication for Mr. Burns*

In McCLURE's for last August, four months before James B. McNamara confessed to dynamiting the Los Angeles *Times* Building, Mr. Burns told how he had proved that the McNamara brothers were guilty. Immediately, the leading labor unions, as represented by their leaders and publications, began to denounce Detective Burns. They declared that Mr. Burns himself had manufactured the evidence upon which he relied to convict the Los Angeles dynamiters. They accused him of "planting" dynamite in various places, and of having been hired by capital to bring the cause of labor into disrepute. Now, this was no new experience for Mr. Burns. When he was running down the franchise and corporation magnates of San Francisco in connection with the Ruel scandal, he was accused of being the enemy of capital. Mr. Burns' own narrative, however, as given in McCLURE's, was a perfectly simple one. It showed, with a great wealth of detail, Mr. Burns' mental processes in unraveling the dynamite mysteries, and the precise methods that he used in establishing the facts. Inasmuch as all the labor unions themselves, and their leaders, now freely admit the accuracy of Mr. Burns' narrative as published in McCLURE'S MAGAZINE, it is worth while to recapitulate the main points. The following is a condensed statement of Burns' own story of how he captured the dynamiters.

### *The Dynamite Epidemic of the Last Five Years*

Detective Burns really discovered the criminals in the Los Angeles explosion before that explosion had occurred. For some months he had been attempting to discover the perpetrators of a large number of similar outrages in different parts of the United States. The dynamite epidemic started in 1905, when attempts were made to destroy several railroad bridges in the neighborhood of Peoria, Illinois, which were being constructed by the American Bridge Company. In the year 1906 a policeman was killed in the Plaza Hotel in New York City, an American Bridge Company's watchman was killed near Pittsburgh, and several explosions took place in Newark and Cleveland on work of the Pittsburgh Construction Company. In 1907 there were a large number of similar accidents, and 1908 was virtually a reign of terror among steel

constructors. In that year there were twenty big dynamite explosions on different works, besides four that ended unsuccessfully. These accidents took place in such widely separated places as Cleveland (Ohio), Elsdon (Illinois), Clinton (Iowa), Perth Amboy (New Jersey), Bradshaw (Maryland), St. Louis, and Kansas City.

### *Explosion in Los Angeles Like the Ones in Peoria*

Although the favorite object of attack was the railroad bridge, steel buildings, steamship piers in the city of New York, and structural material in the Pennsylvania Railroad yards at Philadelphia were other things that were dynamited. It was only by the barest chance in many of these outrages that there was not a great loss of human life. Thus, on the night of July 1, a bridge was blown up on the Lehigh Valley Railroad at Buffalo, just a few minutes before a passenger train was stopped within two hundred feet of plunging into the wreck and killing the passengers. In 1909 and down to September, 1910, there were thirty-five destructive explosions, three other unsuccessful attempts, and several assaults on workmen. All these years the employers had been working hard to find out who was committing these crimes. They had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars upon detectives, without result. In desperation, the firm of McClintic, Marshall & Company, of Pittsburgh, called in Mr. Burns. On September 4, 1910, there had been two explosions in a foundry belonging to Lucas & Sons in Peoria, Illinois. At almost the same minute another explosion had blown up bridge-girders that were lying in the yards of the Peoria & Pekin Union Railway in East Peoria. The girders on this bridge belonged to McClintic, Marshall & Company. Mr. Burns had practically discovered the guilty parties in this explosion when the news came that the *Times* Building in Los Angeles had been destroyed. The circumstances in these cases were so much alike that he immediately concluded that the men responsible for the Peoria explosions were the ones who had operated in Los Angeles.

### *The Tell-Tale Clockwork Bomb*

The dynamiters in the railroad yards at East Peoria had left several important clues. Among the debris their watchman had picked up an unexploded clockwork bomb. In manufacturing this bomb the dynamiters had sawed out a piece of board about the width of a barrel-stave and about nine inches long. At one end they had

fastened a small dry battery, with wires that held the battery lying on its side. In front of the battery they had fastened a little alarm-clock. There was the usual thumb-key on the back of the clock to wind the alarm. To this the dynamiters had soldered a thin strip of metal, which was bent down in such a way that if the key were turned the strip would make a contact with another strip that had been attached to one of the poles of the battery. A telephone wire led from the clock to a ten-quart can of nitroglycerin; and there was a fulminating-cap on the end of it, in the glycerin. Another wire completed the circuit from the battery into the cap. In other words, we had here a complete electrical circuit, broken only by a thin strip of metal which was attached to the flap of the thumb-key on the back of the clock. A slight turn of this key, however, would engage the metal with another strip, and so make the circuit complete. Any one who has had any experience with alarm-clocks knows that when the alarm goes off the key on the back begins to turn. In other words, the originators of this ingenious device could set the alarm at any time they chose, and establish a complete electrical circuit and ignite the nitroglycerin. They would wind up the clock, set the alarm for ten or twelve hours ahead, and betake themselves to some distant point long before the explosion occurred.

Another clue that turned out to be important was the wooden box containing sawdust in which the glycerin had been packed. One of Mr. Burns' assistants found this in a field near the railroad yards, and carefully preserved a good-sized sample of the sawdust. The detectives also discovered and preserved the can that had held the nitroglycerin.

#### *Valuable Clue in Stolen Sawdust*

A man in Portland, Indiana, about two hundred miles from Peoria, who was the agent for a torpedo company, read a description of this can, came to Peoria, and identified it as having come from his factory. That was the beginning of the long detective story which has just led up to the confession of James B. McNamara in Los Angeles. Detective Burns found that a man, who called himself "J. W. McGraw," had bought large quantities of nitroglycerin in Portland, for use in "quarry work." The law prevents the transferal of nitroglycerin within town limits, and "McGraw" had to come to an appointed spot on a country road, in a light express wagon, to get the nitroglycerin. In this wagon he brought two packing-cases and a considerable amount of sawdust to pack around the nitroglycerin tins. The sawdust, which Detective

Burns had carefully collected at the scene of the accident in East Peoria, now became of the utmost importance. By further investigation the detectives found the livery stable where "McGraw" had hired his wagon, and the farm-yard where he had stolen the sawdust from a pile beside a new barn. There was sawdust in the bottom of the wagon and sawdust by the roadside where "McGraw" had packed the tins. This sawdust was exactly the same kind as that which the detectives found in the East Peoria railroad yards. Meanwhile they had obtained several good descriptions of "John W. McGraw," and a good specimen of his handwriting. They traced him to Indianapolis, where he had frequently been seen in the company of another man. These two men had been overheard several times talking familiarly of a certain John J. McNamara, secretary and treasurer of the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron-Workers. This was the labor union which had been engaged for many years in a bitter struggle with the Erectors' Association to compel a closed shop. /

Mr. Burns had all this information in hand when the explosion took place, in Los Angeles, which killed twenty-one men. A few hours after the destruction of the *Times* Building, a gardener found another bomb in the basement of the home of General Harrison Gray Otis, of Los Angeles. General Otis was the proprietor of the Los Angeles *Times*, and the man at whom the hatred of the Los Angeles labor unions was particularly directed. A third bomb was found beside the house of the secretary of the Manufacturers' and Merchants' Association of Los Angeles, which had been helping in the fight for an open shop. This bomb was saved, and proved to be an exact duplicate of the one that Detective Burns had found in Peoria — battery, clock, and all.

#### *Burns Locates the 80-per-Cent Dynamite*

Mayor Alexander of Los Angeles asked Burns to undertake the investigation of the dynamiting. In the course of time he had the complete details in hand. He found that a powder company in San Francisco had sold considerable quantities of 80-per-cent dynamite to a man by the name of "Leonard," who was purchasing for his employer, one "J. B. Bryce." The powder company's suspicions were aroused from the first, because 80-per-cent dynamite is a more powerful explosive than is generally used, and has to be made to order. The man came for the dynamite in a small power-boat. Burns got the complete history of this boat from the place

where it had been hired, and traced its course in the hands of its new navigators. He also found the dynamite — all except that which had been used in the Los Angeles operations. He ultimately identified "Leonard" as M. A. Schmidt, a former Chicagoan, who had at one time been a member of the Mill-Workers' Union in Chicago. The particular object of his search, however, was "J. B. Bryce." Burns soon discovered that he was the leader of the crowd, and he had considerable difficulty in trailing him.

#### *"McGraw" Turns Out to be McManigle*

Mr. Burns' assistants now kept a careful eye on "McGraw." This man made the fatal mistake of returning to Indianapolis. He did this in order to get in touch with J. J. McNamara, the secretary-treasurer of the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron-Workers. A thorough investigation of "McGraw" disclosed that his real name was Ortie McManigle. One day he took a train to Kenosha, in Wisconsin, where he was followed, of course, by Mr. Burns' detectives. Here he met a man who completely answered the description of "J. B. Bryce," of the Los Angeles trail. "Bryce" turned out to be Jim McNamara, a brother of the secretary-treasurer. Mr. Burns solved the rest of the mystery by the trick which he says "solves most of the detective cases in these days — the 'tailing.' It's what good palming is to sleight-of-hand. It's the thing the operative has to learn before he can move on a case at all. He has to learn to follow a man on the street, in railroad trains, on street-cars, in hotels, picking him up and dropping him and picking him up again, without ever really losing sight of him and without ever being seen or suspected himself."

This is what Mr. Burns' detectives did with McManigle and Jim McNamara for several months. In course of time Burns had enough evidence in hand to warrant an arrest. He took both men in the lobby of the Oxford Hotel, in Detroit, about the middle of April. The men had gone to Detroit for the express purpose of "pulling off five jobs there." A few minutes before their arrest these men had checked their suit-cases at the hotel. In these receptacles Mr. Burns discovered six clock batteries of identically the same kind as those that had been used in the Los Angeles and Peoria explosions — caps, wires, tools, and even a battery-tester.

#### *Attempt to Bribe Burns Detectives*

Jim McNamara, soon after his arrest, practically gave up any idea of fighting. He said to Burns' son Raymond, who had him in charge:

"You don't want me for a Chicago job. You want me for a Los Angeles job." He attempted to buy off the Burns detectives, offering them thirty thousand dollars to let him go free. He sought to justify what he had done, saying that he had done it to further the cause of union labor. "I'd blow the whole damn country up if I thought it would get us our rights," he said.

McNamara, though talking freely in this off-hand manner, refused to make any formal statement. McManigle, however, confessed. Perhaps Mr. Burns' greatest gift as a detective is his ability to obtain confessions. He does not resort to third-degree methods, but goes about it in a perfectly simple, straightforward manner. On this occasion he took McManigle aside and had a quiet talk with him. He told him exactly what he had been doing for the last few months, described his movements from day to day, and showed a familiarity with his whole dynamiting record that was simply overwhelming. McManigle saw precisely what the McNamaras recently saw in Los Angeles: that the Burns case against them was so complete that it was useless to attempt to put in any defense. A few hours after Burns' talk with him, McManigle sent word that he would like to see him again. On this occasion he told Burns the truth about the whole conspiracy.

#### *Dynamite Stored in a Barn*

John J. McNamara's arrest followed as a matter of course. In a short time Mr. Burns had in his possession absolutely convincing evidence against all three men. One of his most interesting discoveries was made at the farmhouse of a man named D. Jones. One day Mr. Burns appeared at Jones' door and asked the latter to take him to his barn. It was seven in the evening, and growing dark. Jones brought a lantern and the barn key. In one corner of the barn stood a piano-box. "Jones," said Burns, "whose box is that?"

"It belongs to J. J. McNamara," replied Jones.

"What is it doing here?"

"Why, he has it to keep books in."

"What sort of books?"

"Records — the union's old books."

"Jones," said Burns, "didn't you know there was dynamite in that box?"

The farmer became so frightened that he could scarcely answer. "No!" he finally gasped.

Burns had with him one of the keys which he had found on James B. McNamara in Detroit. With this he unlocked a heavy padlock on the box. He found that the box was packed with

forty pounds of dynamite and a small tin of nitroglycerin. "Jones," he said, "what sort of books did you think they were going to pack in sawdust?"

The farmer replied that J. J. McNamara had hired storage room in the barn to keep old books and records, paying a year's rent of sixty dollars in advance; that McNamara had bought the piano-box, and hired him to buy the sawdust and haul it to the box in the barn. The farmer's wife corroborated these statements.

### *[Dynamite and Clocks in a Vault]*

Detective Burns' next step was to visit a kind of vault in the basement of the American Central Life Building, which had been built for Secretary McNamara's express use. In this he found four packages containing about eighty pounds of dynamite, each package being wrapped in newspapers, and a corner of each being torn open as if to make a hole for a fuse. He also found fourteen of the little alarm-clocks, identical with those discovered in Peoria and Los Angeles, a box of fulminating-caps, several yards of insulating-wire, a number of metal strips to be attached to the alarm-clocks, and some odds and ends of electrical apparatus. In the same place he found a kind of valise of "fiber-board," specially made to fit one of the ten-quart tins of nitroglycerin that had been

discovered in Peoria. In J. J. McNamara's bedroom Burns also found one of the little alarm-clocks. In Tiffin, Ohio, in a shed on property that belonged to McManigle's father, the detectives unearthed five hundred and forty pounds of dynamite. In a railroad station at Toledo, Mr. Burns found a dress-suit case, belonging to McNamara, soaked with nitroglycerin.

These discoveries certainly seemed to fix both the Peoria and the Los Angeles crimes pretty closely upon the McNamara brothers and McManigle. When taken in connection with McManigle's full confession, there appeared scarcely a loophole of escape. And there was only one way in which the McNamara brothers and their sympathizers could meet the situation. That was by putting up the claim that Mr. Burns' discoveries were simply the result of a conspiracy, that he himself had "planted" all these explosives and other incriminating evidence. This claim was made so emphatically by certain labor leaders all over the United States that a large number of the best intentioned labor-union men themselves were deceived. The fact that the labor unions themselves, now that McNamara's confession has cleared up the situation, have so generally repudiated the real conspirators, promises a new and better day for the best interests of labor unions in the United States.

## THE ARSON MYSTERIES

### DETECTIVE BURNS' FIRST GREAT CASE

BY HARVEY J. O'HIGGINS

**T**HE "great" detective in fiction and on the stage is less a man than a penetrative intelligence, scientific, mysterious, scarcely human, silently inscrutable, and moving behind impenetrable disguises. But for the detective in real life — where even rouge on a woman's cheek is apparent — no elaborate disguise is possible; silence in him would be at once suspected; the mere appearance of astuteness would defeat

Note: For obvious reasons, some proper names and descriptions of places have been changed, in this narrative, beyond any possibility of identification.

him; he must seem everything that is commonplace and average. To be successful, he must have the engaging human qualities that disarm suspicion; he must have sympathy and imagination to understand his fellows and move according to their expectations; he must be able to act a part convincingly in its proper emotions; he must have "magnetism" and social address. In short, he must use the tools of the "confidence man," — as the soldier uses the tools of the murderer, — and the difference between the detective and the swindler, as between the sol-