

# WILLIAM J BURNS DETECTIVE



The Greatest  
Silent Factor  
In American Public Life

# DETECTIVE WM. J. BURNS—Will Speak on the Lyceum Platform

WE ARE GRATIFIED that we may make the above announcement—that Mr. Burns will devote some time to the American Lyceum. No more important Lyceum announcement will be made this season. His is a personality that has impressed itself strongly upon the rank and file of our citizens and all are interested in hearing him. It is fortunate that he is a splendid speaker for he has a vital lecture—one that the American public will gladly hear. He has lectured enough to demonstrate his ability on the platform, and huge audiences have greeted him wherever he has spoken. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis declares his lecture to be one of the best he ever heard. On another page is a copy of a letter from one of the leading Western Chautauquas. On at least one occasion the local committee cleared \$1700.00 on his lecture.

▲A man is best able to lecture on subjects with which he has become familiar through personal contact and observation. William J. Burns, detective, hero of a thousand escapades, solver of the greatest crimes ever committed against society in our country, will lecture on what he knows the most about, the perils to American Citizenship.

▲At the present time the political and social unrest in the United States, bringing in its wake a complex civilization, has given birth to problems of great magnitude—problems which attack the very heart of our progress and prosperity. These problems are many and varied, but no more serious question has ever confronted us than that of the social outlaw, the man who knows not the meaning of true American citizenship.

▲The essence of Mr. Burns' lecture is true American citizenship, showing that a lax observation of voters' duties creates evils. What is the worth of good citizenship; where the faults; what causes numberless criminals each year, outcasts who prey on society? How may we best remedy these social evils and throw the strong arm of organized society about perverted minds that they may be reformed, or at least be prevented from harming society?

▲Mr. Burns has dealt with the highest and lowest types of Americans; he has descended from the marble steps of the White House into the haunts of the underworld. Who is better able to judge what constitutes good American citizenship? Who has had a chance to better observe national conditions and point out reforms that may remedy the evils?

▲His lecture is interspersed with personal incidents and anecdotes, which make it doubly interesting. It is safe to say that no more vital lecture has ever been presented to the American public.

## Lecture Subject: *American Citizenship*

### A TELEGRAM

To William J. Burns:

All good American citizens feel that they owe you a debt of gratitude for your signal service to American citizenship.  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

## Burns—Star of the Secret Service

In *Overland Monthly* for January, 1908

W. M. J. BURNS, the star of the United States Secret Service, who has brought to a successful prosecution some of the most startling criminal cases in the history of the Pacific Coast, not only has the backbone to fight successfully against the tremendous pressure that is brought to bear upon him when he starts to secure legal evidence against a rich criminal, but he has the experience as a detective and the power of handling men which enable him to cope with the immense criminal organization of the criminal rich. It not only takes a strong man, but a man morally clean in his personal life to capture a rich crook. The detective organizations employed by rich men to keep them out of prison are constantly engaged in aggressive warfare against Burns and his forces. If Burns had ever been "off color" or "reachable" in any way, the skilled detectives and lawyers of accused rich men would have long ago seized upon such facts. Indeed, it is because Burns is absolutely honest that he and his associates have successfully prosecuted former Mayor Schmitz, and Abraham Ruef, the former political boss of San Francisco, and have secured the indictments of many wealthy men for bribery to obtain privileges and franchises.

In his peculiar field, Burns' experiences are as absorbingly interesting as those of Sherlock Holmes. *But Burns is more than a detective. Over and above all, he is essentially a moral agent.* He speaks of a rich crook in the same breath that he speaks of a poor crook, and without consciousness of the fact that to many people the crimes of the rich are less heinous than the crimes of the poor. To him all crooks look alike. They are all common crooks, enemies of the Government.

For fifteen years Burns had charge of all the important investigations made by the secret service division. He has never failed on a single case. He was loaned by the treasury department to Secretary Hitchcock of the Interior Department to investigate the land frauds, but it was found that these frauds were of such an alarming character that Burns was permanently transferred to the Interior Department, where he organized an independent Secret Service, and unearthed the land frauds in California and Oregon that resulted in the conviction of U. S. Senator Mitchell and many others equally as prominent. Mr. Burns was then induced by Rudolph Spreckels and Francis J. Heney to resign from the Government and he left the service to better assist the prosecution. When a San Francisco newspaper announced that the municipal corruptions of San Francisco were under investigation, and that a Secret Service agent had been secured, to whom failure was impossible, most everyone thought it an idle boast. It seemed preposterous that the powerful clique in control of the City Government could be broken. "This is different," they said. "Burns is up against it!" Yet Chief Wilkie, when asked by Secretary Hitchcock what could be done to aid in further unearthing the gigantic land frauds that had been discovered, had said he would give him the star of the service. "Can anything be accomplished?" asked Hitchcock. "Burns has never failed," replied Wilkie. And it was because he had never failed that the downfall of the San Francisco boodlers was predicted. Burns' power of divination is almost supernatural. He has unraveled some of the most amazing cases in the world's history, which, when described, show how tame, after all, are the imaginations of Conan Doyle and Gaboriau.

The worst enemies to the prosperity of this country, says Burns, are municipal and state corruption and commercial depravity, and the one finds its source in the other.

## A Detective of the Old School

By Lincoln Steffens in September, 1907, *American Magazine*

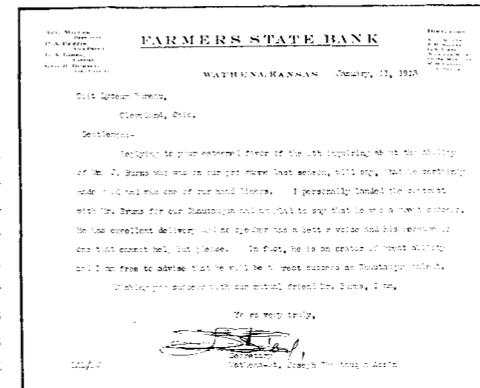
BURNS is a detective. He is a detective of the old school, the kind you read about in books; he uses his head. Burns also makes thieves help him, but the thieves he uses are those that did the job. He "gets them right," makes them "come through" (as he calls confessing), and his genius appears in the way in which he finds out who the thieves are. He exercises his imagination: he calls it forming a theory, but, as we follow this detective's story through the land frauds, we shall see that his theorizing consists in nothing but mental seeing aided by reason. And the beginning thereof is suspicion.

Burns' suspicion is almost universal. The President once complained that Burns thought everybody was a thief until his innocence was proven, and Burns answered with surprise: "Well, they are—here in Washington." Burns knows his Washington. His suspicion is built up by insight, but it is founded upon facts.

## Wm. J. Burns, the Keenest of Detectives

By Lincoln Steffens in the April, 1908, *American Magazine*

O BURNS, the intriguer, we can do justice here. A detective, he is crafty, but he certainly is a master of his craft. He deals, and he double-deals; he must, for he has criminals to deal with, but he is loyal to his clients, Mr. Spreckels and the good citizenship of San Francisco. In all that horrid atmosphere of bribery, when suspicion shadowed the best of men, no one ever questioned the honesty of Burns, the detective. Most remarkable of all, however, is this observation: Through all the maze of these intrigues; through all this plotting and counter-plotting; through all the deception, acted and spoken, and the lies—some of them his—Burns saw, and he clung to, and he pursued the truth. His purpose is penal, he is trailing human beings, but he sees more. "You take those confessions of the supervisors," he says, "and you read them, then take Gallagher's story and Ruef's; put these together with all that we know; do that," this detective says, "and you will get a perfect sketch of the outlines of government, not local government, not labor government, but—government."



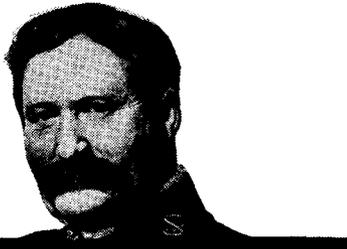
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## M<sup>c</sup>CLURE'S MAGAZINE

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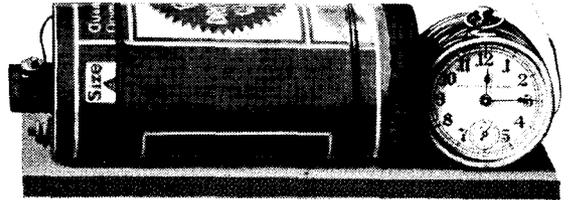
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