

CLUE IN FRANK CASE BRINGS BURNS HERE

Has Solved the Atlanta Murder
Mystery, He Says, and Is Now
Checking Up His Work.

KNOWS WHO KILLED GIRL

And Says His Report Will Convince
the Most Skeptical—Speaks
in Praise of Frank.

William J. Burns's investigation of the case of Leo M. Frank of Atlanta, Ga., who was condemned to death on the charge of having murdered little Mary Phagan, last night brought him back to this city, where there is an end which requires attention. He will return to Atlanta to-morrow night. This morning he will send down there Guy B. Biddinger, assistant general manager of the Burns Agency, to join Dan S. Leon of New Orleans, district manager of the Southern division of the agency.

Mr. Burns said on his arrival that he was absolutely clear in his own mind as to who had murdered Mary Phagan. He was unwilling to go any further at present, preferring not to anticipate his final report in the case, which, he said, would be made public in the near future and clear up every vestige of mystery in the case. He asserted that the murder was not the result of a plot of several persons.

Pending the publication of his complete report, Mr. Burns would not say whether he had found Frank guilty or innocent, nor whether he had fixed the guilt of the murder upon the negro Conley, on whose testimony Frank was convicted. He described Frank, however, in terms of highest credit after many long and thorough questionings of him in his cell by day and by night.

Has Unravelled Mystery, He Says.

Mr. Burns explained that he had first been called into the Frank case by prominent public-spirited citizens of Atlanta, among whom also were some friends of Frank. He had been urged in letters from all parts of the country to take up the case.

"At first I told them that I did not care to take the matter up," he said, "as, if I found I was tending to thwart the ends of justice, I would immediately withdraw, and that would prejudice the case against Frank and work an injustice to him. They promptly told me, however, that they would be glad to have me take it up on that understanding; that I might go into it as soon and as strongly as I liked; that Frank was accessible to me at all times of the day and night for the closest possible examination into every detail of the case; and that, after I finished my report, I could make it public, no matter whether its findings were favorable or damning to Frank.

"Under those conditions I took the matter up, and now I am willing to stake my professional reputation for clean and honest work on the report I shall make. I have found the case tremendously interesting from start to finish. Of course, from the beginning I received all sorts of outrageous charges made to me in anonymous letters in connection with the case, but I disregarded these entirely. Some begged me not to allow my reputation to be besmirched by handling such a case.

"I have given every angle of the case a most thorough and minute investigation, both in Atlanta itself and in other cities to which various ends of the case led. There is now absolutely no mystery attached to any feature of it. Nevertheless, in order to make assurance absolutely sure, I have assigned Mr. Biddinger and Mr. Leon, two of the best detectives in the country, to check up my entire investigation.

Knows Who the Murderer Is.

"Immediately after finishing the New York end of my investigation I shall return to Atlanta to run down the last loose threads. I expect to call on Chief of Police Beaver, Chief of Detectives Lanford, Solicitor-General Dorsey, and Mr. Smith, the attorney of the negro Conley, and Conley himself. I have seen none of these men so far. I want to have all my other data complete as concerns the case before I see them. I think all officials will co-operate with me, and that none will be hostile, inasmuch as I approached the case with an open mind. It will be perfectly satisfactory for me to speak to the negro Conley in the presence of his attorney, as Mr. Smith has suggested. I have no desire to act in any way unfairly to anyone."

Mr. Burns said his report would be made public very soon, no matter whom it helped or hurt.

"Do you think Frank innocent of the murder?" he was asked.

"I refuse absolutely to answer that, or to anticipate my report," replied Mr.

Burns. "I will only say it is clear in my own mind who the murderer is."

"Do you think Conley committed the murder?"

"I refuse to answer that, too," replied the detective.

"Yet you say you know who the murderer is, and so must know whether Frank is guilty or innocent," it was suggested, "or can it be that there was a plot of more than one person?"

"I will say this: There was no plot of several persons," answered Mr. Burns decisively.

Asked what impression he had gathered of Frank as a result of his many interviews with him in the prison cell, the investigator said:

Speaks in Praise of Frank.

"I was with Frank often, day and night. I can say there is not the slightest foundation for the charge that his personal habits were bad. He has a brilliant mind, and is a type of the hard, plodding, methodical business man. His record had been absolutely clean and above reproach before this case was brought against him, and there had never been the slightest charge of any sort reflecting on his character up to the time of his trial.

"As far as public sentiment in Atlanta is concerned, there seems to have been a decided revulsion of feeling there. People have begun to take a calmer view of the case. They do not clamor for a victim now, but simply want the ends of justice worked out and the right man punished for the crime. It was commendable in the Solicitor General to prosecute the case vigorously, as he did, for the crime was a most atrocious one."

Mr. Burns refused to divulge any of the many startling new discoveries which it was said his investigations had netted. Asked whether any use had been made of the dictaphone in the course of his investigations, he replied:

"You will find all that in my report. I am sure when that is published the truth will be laid bare so clearly and indisputably as to convince the most skeptical."