

# NEW CASES OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYSTERIES

## Colonel James Fraser and the Railway Mystery

BY GEORGE BARTON

Colonel James Fraser will be recalled as one of the best Chiefs of Police who ever had charge of the "bobbin" in the world's greatest metropolis. Colonel Fraser served with distinction in the British army before accepting the important municipal post, and enjoyed a splendid record, both as a soldier and a civilian. Sir Richard Marne, the then Chief Commissioner of Police, said that Fraser was the best executive of his time. His jurisdiction extended over the so-called "city," which included an area of a mile more than one square mile, the richest and the most densely populated section of the civilization of the metropolitan area of the railway carriage world. The credit of the solution of the mysterious murder of the railway carriage must, of course, be divided among the rank and file of the London police, but it also reflects in a specially brilliant manner upon the administration of Colonel James Fraser.

The time was about July, some years ago, the place the station platform of the North London Railway Company at the Metropolitan borough of Hackney. A number of passengers were waiting the 5 o'clock local from London. It arrived presently, with bell ringing and engine puffing up great clouds of smoke, a golden streak into the morning air. The train came to a full stop, a man on the platform made a rush for the nearest railway carriage. He opened the door and entered but suddenly drew back with a look of fear on his face and a cry of horror on his lips.

"Get aboard! Get aboard!" cried a guard impatiently. "We can't wait here all day." The man, who had one foot on the station platform and the other on the railway carriage, stood there as though he had been petrified. He was looking at the carriage as if he were seeing it for the first time. He had seen it before, but he had never seen it so close. He had never seen it so full of people. He had never seen it so full of life. He had never seen it so full of mystery.

The guard looked and what he saw robbed his tongue of its gift. The setting sun shone a golden streak into the coach and the glaring light fell upon the blue cushions a pool of red blood. The guard and the hesitating passenger entered together and made a careful examination of the carriage. The man's first sight had not deceived him. There could be no possible doubt about it. The cushions of the carriage were soaked with human blood. It was the coach was a hat, a walking stick, and a small black leather bag.

The railway carriage was run on to its destination and a dispatch instantly flashed to Colonel James Fraser, the head of the London police force. In the meantime the most persistent cross-questioning failed to throw any light upon the mystery of the blood-soaked cushions. The guard remembered in a hazy sort of way that two men had entered the carriage just before the train started. One was a man in a dark suit and a top hat, and the other was a man in a light suit and a bowler hat. They were together but he had no certain recollection of that. As to their appearance, he had no idea. He only knew that he had a crowded train that day, and in the hurry and bustle of his work paid but scant attention to individuals.

There was one clue, however, and that was of a character that could not be overlooked even in the densest display by the railway police. It was the impression of a blood-stained hand on the door of the railway carriage. The first act of Colonel Fraser was to order the guilty carriage out of service. He directed that special pains be taken to preserve the impression of the blood-stained hand so that it could be referred to whenever it was needed. That same night word came to Police Headquarters that the body of a well-dressed man had been discovered at a spot where the North London Railway passes Victoria Park. The man was conscious, but still ill. He was taken to a nearby hospital and all that

medical science could do was done to restore him to consciousness, but in vain. He died within 24 hours, without saying a word. It was evident from the start that he had been murdered. Unfortunately, his head and face had been beaten so cruelly that he was unrecognizable. Just at a time when the solution of his identity seemed farthest away the hospital authorities came upon a card in his pocket. It read, "Thomas Briggs, Roberts & Co., Lombard Street, London."

An officer was at once dispatched to the office of Roberts & Company, in Lombard Street. The head of that firm said that Mr. Briggs was their chief clerk, and one of their most valued employees, and that they were at a total loss to account for his unexplained absence from his post. He had been with their banking house for nearly half a century, and during all of that time had promptly reported for work as the clock was striking 8. He failed to do so that morning, and they had assumed that he was ill. Just as they were preparing to send an inquiry to his home a message was received stating that he had not returned to his house in Hackney the night before. A hurried investigation proved that Mr. Briggs left his home at the usual hour on the previous day. He carried a gold-headed cane and a gold watch, and he was also in his possession a gold watch and chain. After concluding his business at the bank, he left at the usual hour in the afternoon, and dined at his married daughter at Peckham. He returned to the city in time to take the regular train at Fenchurch Street for his home at Hackney. That was the last he was ever seen alive.

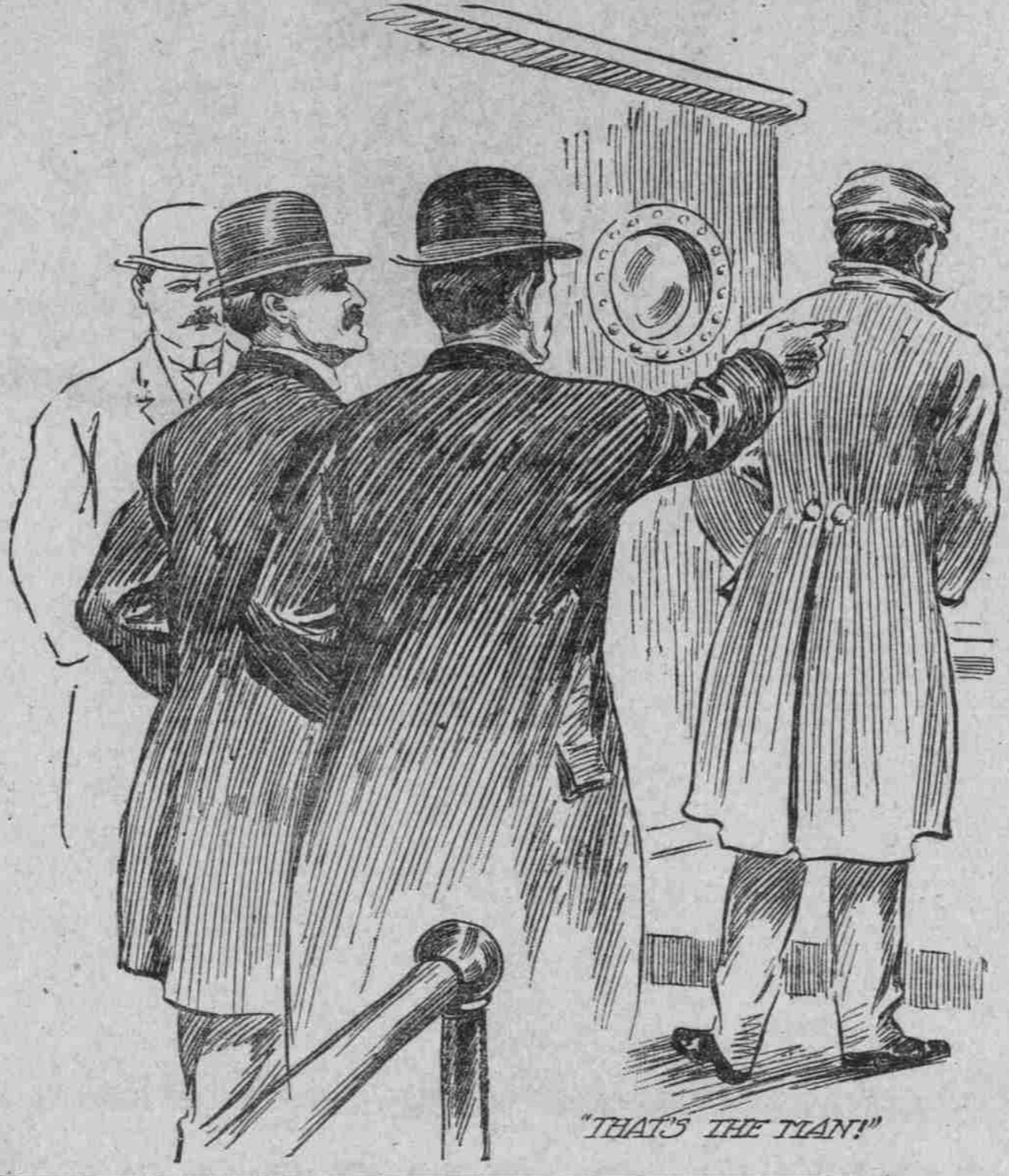
It did not take many hours to prove that the unoffending clerk of Roberts & Company and the unknown individual whose body had been found in Victoria Park were one and the same person, and that the old gentleman had been brutally murdered for his money. The eyes and the gold watch and chain were both missing. The blood-soaked cushions, the general disorder of the railway carriage, and the impression of the blood-stained hand on the door of the vehicle proved that a terrible struggle had taken place before the foul deed was accomplished. It must have been done very early in the morning, because the distance from Fenchurch Street, from whence the train started, and Hackney was only a matter of three miles—in fact, the dead must have been committed immediately after the train left the city, for the body had been thrown into the bushes of Victoria Park, and the murderer had evidently jumped from the train before it reached Hackney Station.

The hat found in the coach had a lining which indicated that it had been manufactured by Walker, a fashionable hatter in Crawford Street, Martleybone. Colonel Fraser had an interview with the hatter and ascertained from him that the hat must have been purchased within two weeks of the murder. He said that it was almost impossible to keep track of his customers, especially as he transacted a considerable transient trade. He, however, was very much interested in the hat in question, and he was purchased by a short, stout, red-faced man, wearing a blue coat with brass buttons. The man carried a whip and from a certain manner, and conversation, was evidently a cabman. Further investigation among the officials of the North London railway brought to the front a guard who remembered having seen two men enter the fatal carriage on that evening in July. The first man he described as an elderly, respectable-looking person. The details corresponded to a nicety to the appearance of Mr. Briggs, the murdered bank clerk. He was a man of about 50 years of age, with a high forehead, and a few white hairs. He was dressed in a dark suit, and a top hat. He was short in stature, and his legs seemed very light for the upper part of his body. He carried a gold-headed cane, and a gold watch and chain. This was an unusually intelligent description, and the police secured

London in the hope of dragging in some man to answer this description. But the days went by and there was no result. The newspapers were filled with the details of the crime and there was great public indignation. The oldest citizen

who had committed the murder. Every pawshop in or around the metropolis was visited but none of them possessed any jewelry that corresponded to that which had been stolen from the bank clerk in the railway carriage. Colonel

add to the importance of this discovery. It was learned that the exchange of the jewelry had been made on the day following the murder of Thomas Briggs. The news of this first link in the chain of evidence was widely published in the



sens of the metropolis wrote scathing letters to the London Times in which they inquired dramatically whether it was possible for a man to go on a railway journey in the heart of the British Empire without incurring the risk of being murdered. The police chafed under this criticism, but still they did not appear to make any progress. Colonel Fraser sat in his office-day by day and tried to solve the problem. He finally resolved that it would be necessary to trace the gold watch and chain that had been stolen from Mr. Briggs before it would be possible to get a clue to the man

Fraser was not satisfied with these reports, and determined to personally prosecute his inquiries and researches in another direction. He selected the jewellers of London and began his work in the locality known as Cheapside. To his delight he came upon a significant clue within 24 hours. Mr. Graves, a jeweler in Cheapside, possessed a gold chain which was identical with the one that had been owned by Mr. Briggs. The jeweler said that he had accepted the chain in exchange for another one which he had given to a foreigner, a person who had called at his establishment. To

London newspapers. On the day following, while Colonel Fraser was seated at his desk in the police headquarters, the door opened and a stranger, red-faced man, wearing a blue coat with brass buttons. The man carried a whip and from his dress and manner was evidently a cabman. He saluted in an awkward manner. "Is this Colonel Fraser?" "It is," was the terse response. "And may you be the chief of police?" "That's what I am called sometimes," was the indulgent response.

## Harriman's New Home on a Rock

Perched on an Eerie of the Ramapo Range, Can Be Reached Only by Inclined Railway.

ONE of the steepest of the granite knuckles of the Ramapo range is an elevation known as Tower Hill, a forest clad, boulder-strewn, massive bulk which sweeps upward to a precipitous ascent from the winding valley. From this rock-bound eye the eye can range for a full 30 miles to west and east, over the long sweeping hills which roll away from this master range, undulations which from the crest of this towering Tower Hill, have the appearance of great earth waves suddenly still. It is on the very summit of this height that there is now being erected a structure the like of which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find anywhere on this side of the world and perhaps one might search the crags which overlook the Rhine and find there four castles perched so high as this massive building which is now nearing completion.

steep high sides seemed to promise a heart-breaking ascent. The reporter looked at the horse, whose breath was coming in quick steaming puffs, and mentioned his misgivings. Oh, that was all right," was the cheerful reply. "You will see."

All the House Home-Built. Mr. Harriman's idea is to have all of his house home-built, and it is. It is being built mainly of stone, and the stone is from the very rock that was quarried out to make the foundations. Practically all the woodwork that enters into the building is cut from his own preserves here. You know he owns about 45,000 acres around here, this house of his up there standing on the northern section of a well, here you see the woodworkers at work on the wood. All of the decoration part is being carved by hand. Another thing look here! See that chair? That is from the woods up here, timber from his own trees. That chair is one that is being turned out for Mr. Harriman's house. All the rest that are to be used up there will be turned out here, and in the same way.

the weak ones have been cut out, leaving only the ones of strong and sturdy growth. That is part of the general plan of the building. See that idea from the National Forestry Department. Mr. Harriman has had a lot of people working on it, and you see how much has been done.

Twenty-two Bathrooms. Of the seventy rooms which it is to contain, twenty-two are bathrooms. The building is in the form of a cross with the entrance hall in the west wing. This hall is 29 by 80 feet in size. In the same wing is the living room, another vast apartment which, if subdivided, could be made into two or three flats of the Harlem type. The dining room, on the first floor, is 24 by 31 feet. It opens into a loggia which overlooks the two lakes whose basins are a few hundred yards to the eastward of the mansion.

Nothing but a Shack. A reporter for the Sunday Times visited the place on Friday. There had been a report that Mr. Harriman was expending \$3,000,000 on his house on the hill, and that from his Harriman point of view it was nothing but a shack, a remarkable curiosity to know just what it was brought about the view.

Leading the way around the corner of the building there came into view an inclined railway, up which carload after carload of material was being drawn by steam power at the other end.

There are thirty bedrooms, all of them on the second floor. The library, 39 by 55 feet, is to be separate from the main building, but to be connected with it by a hall.

## Photographs Let Cats and Dogs

Western Woman Finding No Babies in New York to Work on Devotes Her Time to Animals.

"PRIVATE photographer, specialty dogs and cats," is the reading on the professional card of a prosperous young business woman who makes her home in a well-kept apartment house on Riverside drive. Having read and duly pondered the statement, a New York Sun reporter asked the young woman to talk about her specialty.

"To begin with, I need to make a specialty of children, little babies. There are so many more children in the West than here in New York! You know, I'm from the West, the young woman went on. "When I first came to New York I almost starved to death the first six months. It took me just that long to catch on."

cats are as a rule really attached to them. One cat whose photograph I have made every month since I have been in the business is the most indifferent little piece of fluff, and I don't think I have ever seen yet its mistress, who is a very married woman, is as devoted to it as she or any woman could be to a child.

"You see, I brought the idea of making a specialty of children with me to a place where there are no children. That is, none that people care about having photographs taken."

"It worried me to death at first. I couldn't make out what was wrong. Then I began to realize that instead of what I had expected, people having children as in the West, they all had either cats or dogs. I had a set of new cards printed and set out."

"The lady had picked her up in the street only two days before. The little thing had been hungry, and as the lady stepped from her carriage she whined and looked up in her face as if she believed she had been abandoned."

"Cats are much more easily photographed than dogs, for the simple reason that they are not so restless, have fewer eccentricities or less individuality. I have known cats intimately all my life and have only found two varieties so far as dispositions are concerned, the amiable cat and the spiteful cat."

"This particular cat is one of the near intelligent cats that I have met. She really appears to be proud of her bracelets and necklace, and she will not only allow me to take her for her but she will vote their time and thought to better things, that is very true, but on the other hand they might do worse."

"The New York apartment house is the paradise of the pet dog and they give me a comfortable living. I should not advise any photographer wishing to make a specialty of dogs or cats to start business in a city where apartment houses do not abound. In the average apartment house one can count on finding at least six dogs whose owners are glad to pay for their photographs, if not every month at least several times a year."