AN ARRANT RASCAL.

The True Story of Reginald Birchall, Benwell's Murderer.

HE WILL EXPIATE HIS CRIME TO-DAY.

Cowardly and Cruel as a Boy. He Plots Murder in Cold Blood as a Man.

BENWELL'S DEATH IN THE SWAMP.

Full Story of the Most Dramatic Chapter in the Criminal Annals of Canada—Birchall's Trap for Young Men, His Coolness When His Victim's Body Was Found, and His Exciting Trial.

PROLOGUE.

There is a lonely wood, a dense tangle of tamarack, charred stumps, and brush wood, six miles from the Canadian township of Woodstock known to the neighborhood as Blenheim Swamp. It is an utterly desolate and awesome place, and few persons ever pass along the road that runs through it. In the latter days of February last, however, two brothers, George and John Elveridge, came to the swamp to chop wood. All that week snow and sleet had fallen on the forest.

The day was most dismal; the wood silent as a vast sepulchre. Overhead somewhere a raven croaked ominously. Suddenly one of the men uttered a cry of alarm.

"Look," he said, "there's a man lying on that pile of saplings!"

The man was dead, and the brothers, suspecting a murder, fled to the road, and there, by a happy chance, they met with the constable of the near-by town of Princeton, and, fortified with this official representative of the law, returned to the spot where the body lay.

It was the body of a young man, cleanly shaven and of dark complexion. The right foot rested on a sapling. The left foot was frozen into the ground, and the ice had to be cut to move it. The face was frozen, too. In the back of the head was a bullet-wound, and near the temple another.

Why, what is this, cried the constable, pointing in astonishment to the clothing. "Somebody has been at work with the scissors. Every mark on trousers, shirt, and vest has been cut away. And, hello, look here!" he added, picking up from under the dead man's head a pair of eyeglasses and a cigar-holder. There were no marks on either. The men abandoned hopes of identifying the body, and set about removing it. They procured a sleigh in haste, laid the corpse inside it, and with their burden drove to the undertaker's at Princeton, where two doctors held an autopsy upon it, and ordered its burial in the Potter's Field.

At dawn next day the brothers were in the swamp again. Presently one of them, drawing his axe along the ground, found a cigar-case. On it was inscribed the name "F. C. Benwell."

The next morning certain persons read of this mystery of Blenheim Swamp, and wondered languidly who Benwell was.

I.

ENTER THE HERO.

The fact has been fairly established to the satisfaction of most criminalogists that a large proportion of criminals the world over have bad parents who were, one or the other, or both, of advanced age. Doubtless the Rev. Joseph Birchall, vicar of a fine English church in a pretty Lancashire village, was well aware of this significant fact (being then an elderly widower of first-rate scholarship) when he fell a victim to the fascination of a woman scarcely older than his youngest daughter. A weak and amiable man, he had brought up a family of seven on a slender income; had got most of his sons into holy orders, and had married most of his girls to fellow-clergymen. As they all united in disapproval of their father's second marriage it was naturally a great relief to him when two children, a boy and a girl, were born, in whom he had hope of reviving the domestic joys he had lost with his first family.

Reginald, the boy, grew rapidly in mind and body. His precocity was painful. He was wayward, mendacious, cowardly, and cruel. His instincts were low. He haunted the theatres, bought portraits of the ballet-girls, and, to indulge in his dramatic tastes, began to steal from the other boys at school. For this he was publicly flogged and expelled—a desperate and incorrigible boy.

Already his mother's heart was breaking.

An outcast from home, the boy's mind turned to the stage. In some subordinate capacity he obtained employment in a country theatre. He sold tickets, hung around the box-office, looked after the display of "posters," and developed a small taste for drawing, which was found useful in the flaming placards or whatever extravaganza the theatre might be producing at the time. This seems to have been the most creditable part of his career.

But mean while his mother had been making peace for him at home. With great pecuniary sacrifice he was sent to Oxford University, where he soon became reckless and defiant of authority. He joined the fastest set that would receive him, he dressed with outrageous extravagance, he spent money as though he were a peer's son, and he revealed still another side of his character.

At school they called him a "liar," at college they called him a "cad." Birchall, despite his parentage, was plainly not a "gentleman." He knew nothing of "good form." He copied men of breeding in their vices, but was wholly unsuccessful in catching their manners.

To obtain recognition from the younger members of his college, his conduct became more and more deplorable. His supper parties were orgies. His feminine companions were the riff-raff of Oxford. His male companions were the lowest kind of "sports." In just two months the authorities had had enough of him. He was ignominiously expelled from the university.

His parents received this second blow with grief unspeakable. His mother grew hollow-eyed and pale. His father, now very old, took to his bed and soon after died.

But Reginald, nothing daunted, sought employment at Myall's, a fashionable photographer in London. At Oxford he considered "trade" unutterably "low." But now he was bent on showing that he could excel in anything he undertook. He seems to have been fairly popular with women, and while plying the camera he met the girl who subsequently became his wife.

She was the daughter of a Mr. Stevenson, one of the freight managers of the London and Northwestern railroad. Her tastes were as theatrical as Birchall's. Her ambition was to play romantic heroines, or, if that was impossible, to pose in photographers' windows as Juliet or Pauline. In Reginald she saw the man who could help her. She believed in him absolutely, and against the stern command of her father married him and set sail for America. Somewhere and somehow in Canada Reginald proposed to make a fortune.

His mother mean while had died of a broken heart, and the little money she was able to leave him fully reconciled him to her death.

II.

AN INTERLUDE.

On the line of the Grand Trunk railroad, as you go from Niagara Falls to Detroit, is the Canadian township of Woodstock. Half a century ago swarms of families of gentle birth came over from England to settle there. Fine carriages with liveried coachmen drove along its roads. But of all these English gentry hardly a survivor remains. Most of them lost their wealth, and their families have long since been scattered.

Woodstock to-day is a quiet country town. Its citizens do everything in a leisurely way, but it was roused in the month of December, 1888, by the announcement that a real live English lord was in town. The gossips at the O'Neill House had hardly time to digest the morsel when the blowing of a horn awoke the tranquil streets, and, handling the ribbons of a four-in-hand, his lordship appeared. He was the first English lord that most of the Woodstockians had seen. The young ladies declared him as handsome as Apollo, and particularly admired his jet-black moustache. His horses were tied up with gay little ribbons; he had a blonde lady of distinguished appearance beside him, and his knee-breeches, flowered waistcoat, and velvet coat, with a hat perched jauntily on the side of his head, completed the most remarkable spectacle that had been seen in Woodstock since the old English families had passed with their liveried coachmen into nothingness.

This gentleman gave his name as Somerset, and as "Lord Somerset" he was thenceforth known. A splendid fellow, he seemed; lavish with his money, a lover of fine horses and choice wines.

He did nothing but enjoy himself, and that he did well. There was one young girl, Alice Smith, the belle of the town, who took his fancy, and to whom he talked about a certain Bottomless Lake, that was said to be in the heart of the Blenheim Swamp, some six miles away. Alice knew little about it and shuddered when the place was mentioned. But for Lord Somerset the lake had a strange fascination. He would spend hours talking with old Rabb the German, who lived just outside the swamp, and whose habit was to "holler"—as he said—when strangers were lost in its mazes; and then, if they didn't hear him "holler," to take down his ancient fowling-piece and fire it. Rabb knew all about the lake and its terrors. He had heard of dozens of people who had drowned themselves in its muddy waters.

Lord Somerset stayed six months at Woodstock. In all that time if he had seemed to be a gay and thoughtless young nobleman, appearances were deceitful indeed. He had learned a great deal about the "farm-pupil" system, whereby ingenuous young gentlemen are sent out to Canada from London, apparently to study agriculture in a leisurely way, but really to have their pockets picked. Moreover, he had actually entered into some sort of business partnership with a man named Pickthal, but this was speedily dissolved, for, as we have said before, Lord Somerset was kept very busy driving horses and drinking wines.

One day he left Woodstock with his handsome wife, and set out for England. There he became once more our old acquaintance, Mr. Reginald Birchall, who had been spending in horses and wines the money left him by his heart-broken mother.

III.

LEADING OUT THE LAMBS.

Mr. Reginald Birchall and wife settled down and at Bainbridge, Maberly Road, Upper Norwood, the residence of Mrs. Birchall's father, and a very comfortable place; but Mr. Birchall addressed his letters from the Junior Constitutional Club, in London, where he was cordially welcomed as a brilliant fellow of solid wealth largely invested in a profitable stock-farm in Canada.

One day the following advertisement appeared in the London newspapers:

"Canada advertiser, married man, having farm in Canada, wishes to meet with gentleman's son to live with him and learn the business with a view to partnership; must have £550 to extend stock; board and lodging given and interest at 5 per cent. until partnership effected; healthy climate; highest references. Address Box ——."

Mr. Birchall baited well for gudgeons, and caught two—Douglas Raymond Pelley, son of Rev. R. P. Pelley, of Walton Place, vicar of Saffron Walden, Essex, and a cousin of the beautiful Lady Pelley, who was one of the suite of Lord Lansdowne when Governor-General of Canada, and Frederick C. Benwell, of Cheltenham, whose father is a colonel in the English army.

Both of the young gentlemen were charmed with the prospect of life on a Canadian stock-farm as opened up to them by the seductive Mr. Birchall, who, for excellent reasons of his own, dealt with them separately and kept them from making each other's acquaintance. Benwell was a smallish young man, about five feet six inches in height, but of stocky build, smooth face, and engaging address. Pelley was of medium height, and about 24 years of age; an unmistakable Briton of the better class, with all its harmless little affectations of manner. He had seen life in Europe and Australia.

"Now," said Mr. Birchall, briskly, to each of his gudgeons, "you will be sure to like my farm. Everything there is very English. We've a smart club at Woodstock; the farm-house is lighted by electric light, and there's excellent shooting and fox-hunting in the vicinity. Of course we're sure to make big money."

He then went on to explain that they must not expect to get on without work, and this pleased them. He said, however, that no severe physical labor would have to be done. It would mostly be overseer work about the horses, ordering things, and seeing things done. There was no farming about it, although he thought of buying a farm next to the one he owned so as to grow feed.

"The scheme, you see, is simply to buy horses in the rough, to train these horses and polish them, so to speak, and sell them at a profit. I have large contracts with railway companies and other big concerns whose horses I furnish."

Mr. Benwell and Mr. Pelley were both delighted and eager to be off. So on February 5, 1890, the three men sailed from Liverpool on the steamer Britannic, Mrs. Birchall accompanying them.

"Pelley," said Birchall, the first day out from Queenstown, "I want you to hold aloof from Benwell; he is a surly, ill-natured fellow, and I've practically decided not to give him a share in our venture."

Mr. Pelley was grateful, and accordingly began to increase the distance between Benwell and himself.

"Benwell," said Mr. Birchall the same day, "beware of Pelley. He's not to be trusted; we'll have to get rid of him; he'll ruin our business."

Mr. Benwell was thenceforward ice itself to Mr. Pelley.

The party was well provided with luggage, and Benwell had no less than thirteen trunks, containing innumerable suits of clothes from Poole's and other fashionable West-End tailors; guns, saddles, fishing-rods, and a full equipment for a gentleman farmer. Pelley was no less well provided.

They arrived in New York on February 14th and registered at the Metropolitan Hotel. The following Saturday they went to Buffalo and stopped at the Stafford House. Up to this point everything had gone smoothly, but the game could no longer be played. They were within a few hours of the handsome stock-farm which Benwell and Pelley had come from England to see and which Birchall knew had never existed.

He was by no means embarrassed, however.

"Pelley," he said, "on Monday morning Benwell and I will leave for the farm on the 6 o'clock train and prepare the way for you and Mrs. Birchall."

Monday was the 17th day of February. At the station Mr. Birchall purchased two tickets for Eastwood Station, on the Grand Trunk railway, and young Mr Benwell rode gayly away to his doom. Meanwhile Mrs. Birchall went out with Mr. Pelley to select some patterns of wall-paper for the adornment of the farm house.

To the astonishment of both, at 9 o'clock the same night Mr. Birchall returned alone.

IV.

THE SLAUGHTER.

It was about quarter past 11 on the morning of February 17th, when two men alighted at the small station of Eastwood from the Grand Trunk train which had left Hamilton at half-past 9. As they were the only passengers for that isolated place, it was quite natural that Conductor Poole should remark their appearance. One was short and the latter of the two (who wore an astrachan cap and shoes laced high up the ankle) was dark.

That was 11:14 A. M., to be very exact.

The two men set out at a brisk pace toward the Blenheim Swamp, which lay about five miles inland. The day was mild; the road rather muddy.

Now it happened that on that very day there was an unusual number of country folk abroad, driving and afoot. So many as thirty-three persons meeting our wayfarers, saluted them, and remarked the cape worn by the shorter and the cap worn by the taller of the two. They remembered the day, because that night there was a dance at Jerry Dake's Hotel in Princeton.

In the swamp several men were gunning.

"Who fired?" said George Fredenburg, suddenly, as two shots in quick succession rang out among the trees.

"I didn't," said John Higginson, following the trail just ahead of him.

"Nor I," shouted George MacDonald, from a distance.

"Guess its John Rabb," said Fredenberg, listening a moment longer. "The old fool thinks we are lost, as though we were going to lose ourselves on the day of Drake's ball."

An hour an a half later the taller man was standing alone in Eastwood Station. Suddenly he glanced with surprise at a pretty girl who nodded to him from the platform.

"Ah! Miss Alice Smith, I believe," he said, going up to her.

"Yes," she answered, "and this is—Somerset or Dudley?"

"Don't you know me?" he laughed, "I am Somerset. I've been in the Northwest for horses, and am going up to Hamilton for some luggage now. I'll see you when I get back."

The train for Niagara reached Eastwood at 3:35 P. M., and "Lord Somerset" boarded it.

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At 9 o'clock that evening, it will be remembered, Mr. Birchall returned to his hotel in Buffalo alone. He said Benwell did not like the farm or the people, and that he had given him the addresses of certain farmers further on in the country. He told Pelley he was not yet ready to go to the farm, as "McDonald," his superintendent, had rented the place to some tenants, and that things were in bad shape. Then he suggested that they go to Niagara Falls, and the following day, February 18th, the three went to Clifton, Ont., across the river from Suspension Bridge. They spent ten days there.

V.

THE ARREST.

One morning there was a pleasant little breakfast party in the boarding house of Mr. Baldwin in the village of Clifton. Mr. Reginald Birchall, Mrs. Reginald Birchall, Mr. Douglas Pelley, a blonde young Englishman whom they had brought from Liverpool, were discussing trivialities, while Mr. Baldwin was reading the morning paper.

"Well," said Mr. Baldwin suddenly, "the body found in Blenheim Swamp has been identified."

Mr. Reginald Birchall, who was raising a teaspoon to his mouth, let it drop with a clatter into his cup.

"What—aw—was the poor devil's name?" asked Mr. Pelley, languidly.

"F. C. Benwell," said Mr. Baldwin.

"Great God!" cried Pelley, rising hastily.

"That's terrible," said Mr. Birchall, never budging.

Mrs. Birchall sat white as death.

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For the past day or two Mr. Pelley had been uneasy. He was out walking one afternoon with his partner near the whirlpool rapids, when Mr. Birchall persuaded him to descend a frail and rickety flight of steps immediately over the water, and he was on the point of stepping upon some rotten boards, which would have precipitated him into the abyss, when a horrible suspicion crossed his mind and he turned back.

Birchall was standing above, calmly looking down.

Again, one dark and blusty night Mr. Birchall said: "Come, let us take a turn on the bridge." The wind was blowing a gale, and they had to lean over to keep their feet. They were quite alone on the great Suspension Bridge, Birchall on the outside, when suddenly he said: "Come out here, Pelley, and keep the wind off."

"A horrible thought," said Mr. Pelley afterward, "crossed my mind, and all of a sudden my suspicions were aroused about this man. In that instant my whole connection with him flashed across me; how he was a perfect stranger to me, and that meeting him as a stranger I had been led to believe in him, and had come out to a strange land with him on the sole strength of a series of plausible stories.

"'No,' I said, 'you stay where you are.'

"I almost felt sick, not from fear, but a strange, undefinable feeling came over me, and I turned back with him at once.

"I thought on that instant that he meant some evil. I knew the place. The rail there alongside the footpath is not more than two and a half feet high, and there are wide openings in it. It would be the easiest thing in the world to pitch a man over that rail or under it into the beginning of the whirlpool rapids."

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It was small wonder, therefore, that Mr. Pelley sprang aghast to his feet when he heard of the murder of Benwell.

"I will go on to Princeton," said Birchall, getting up from the breakfast-table, "and see the body." But when Pelley about an hour later volunteered to accompany him Birchall showed a telegram, which, he said, he had received from the clerk of the Stafford House, in Buffalo, stating that Benwell had gone to New York, and requesting that his luggage be sent there to the Fifth-Avenue Hotel. Pelley immediately started for New York, and was told at the Fifth-Avenue Hotel that nobody named Benwell had been there. He at once returned to Clifton, and as soon as he arrived there found that Birchall had identified Benwell's body and, with his wife, had been arrested. Pelley was himself taken into custody, but afterward released.

VI.

THE TRIAL.

The trial of John Reginald Birchall for the murder of F. C. Benwell began in the town of Woodstock on the 22d of last September. No criminal case had ever excited such attention in Canada. It was of international interest; the eye of the world was on Woodstock, and all the leading English and American newspapers had special correspondents on hand.

When Birchall was arrested the evidence seemed to be equally strong against his wife; but soon it was clearly established that the poor woman never suspected her husband's murderous intentions, merely supposing that he was engaged in some sharp commercial deal. She was accordingly released, but stayed in Woodstock, near the jail, with her sister, steadfastly asserting Birchall's innocence.

By this time the murderer's motive had been revealed. Two days after the tragedy of the swamp he sent the following letter to the father of his victim, Lieutenant-Colonel Benwell, Cheltenham, England:

"My Dear Sir,—Your son has inspected all my books and all my business arrangements, and I introduced him to people who know me well. He suggested taking other advice; I, of course, was perfectly willing, and he consulted a barrister in London concerning the business, with satisfactory results. He has decided to join me, as he has found all that he wished to be satisfactory. I think we shall make a very good business together. The books show a very good profit for last year.

"I think the best way is to place the money in our joint names in the bank to the credit of our reserve fund. We shall take the additional piece of land that I mentioned to you, as we shall now require it for produce. The best way to send money out is by banker's draft. Drafts for us should be drawn on the Bank of Montreal, New York; they have a branch in London. I think the London and Westminster also do business for them. A letter of this kind should be insured and registered.

"We are holding a large sale early in March. Your son was somewhat anxious to share in the profits of the sale, which I am quite willing he should do. So we have signed our deed of partnership, and I am sure he will never regret doing so. Your son is, I think, writing you by this post. Kindly excuse bad writing on my part, but I am rather in a hurry to catch the mail. My letters are generally written by typewriter, as they are so much more legible and clear with no doubt as to the words. We are having papers printed properly, and will be ready in a few days.

"I think you will be pleased that your son has found things satisfactory, and I quite agree that he did much the best thing in coming out to see the business first. I shall send you weekly particulars of all the business done, so that you can see for yourself how things go on. This will be satisfactory to you, I think. Of course, in regard to money, any bank in New York would do for the drafts. We have a business account in our joint names at the American Bank. Your son will doubtless explain his views in his letter."

The envelope of this letter was stamped across the face, "Birchall & Benwell, Lock-Box 313, Niagara Falls, Ont."

When arrested the keys of Benwell's trunk, which Birchall had taken from the custom-house the day after the murder, were found in the prisoner's possession. It was plainly his intention to draw money steadily from Colonel Benwell, whom he prepared for the reception of type-written letters. He could have cashed all checks sent to "Birchall & Benwell," as one partner in a firm can draw upon joint account without the consent of the other member.

The presumption of the Crown then was that Birchall induced Benwell to go into the swamp as a short cut to the farm he pretended to own, really intending to kill him and throw his body into the bottomless pond in the middle of it. During Birchall's absence, however, there had been a fire in the swamp, and the fallen trees and burned stumps had completely obliterated the narrow trail which led from the road to the pond. As the body was found not more than twenty feet from the road, and nearly a quarter of a mile from the pond it is supposed that this plan was abandoned and the murder committed there in the confident belief that the body would never be found. It was only by the merest chance that the two Elveridge brothers went in there five days later to chop wood, a thing that had never before been done in the Tamarack swamp, and at once stumbled upon the body, with all the names cut out of the clothing and the pockets turned inside out.

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The trial lasted a week. For all Woodstock it was one long holiday. The people began gathering about the door of the Town Hall, in which the court-room had been fixed, as early as 8 o'clock in the morning. The crowd was composed not only of towns-people, but of farmers, who seemed to take a great deal more interest in the trial than anybody else.

Perhaps no man charged with murder was ever before in such an apparently easy frame of mind as Birchall seemed to be. As he sprang out of the carriage at the entrance to the court each morning there was a spring to his step and a smile upon his face that would have done honor to a bridegroom.

When in the prisoner's box it was impossible for anything but the top of his head to be seen, except when an uncommon stir attracted his attention, and he craned his neck, and so brought his black eyes into view. On the stage sat a number of pretty women. The telephone transmitters that hung over the heads of the counsel and the Judge worked all day. The wires ran to a hotel, where the tubes were rented at 25 cents an hour. There were also four tubes in a private room for ladies.

Before the proceedings began on the third day the petit jurors were excused, and told that they might leave the court. Not a soul moved. There are seventy-two of these jurors, and after his lordship had waited a moment he requested the jurors to retire. Old Sheriff Perry said in quivering tones that the jurors would please step out and get their pay, and if they didn't get it now they wouldn't be able to get it at all. Then the jurors tumbled over one another to get out.

In court Birchall amused himself most of the time in sketching. He drew rather clever pictures of the jury, the judge, the learned counsel, and many of the hundred and one witnesses.

One afternoon at the end of the day's hearing an enterprising correspondent followed the prisoner to jail. He had just finished his supper, and came down the winding iron stairs of the prison into the little hall below. He picked up a copy of a Toronto paper which was profusely illustrated with the pictures of witnesses, and contained among others the picture of himself, his wife, and her sister, and also the picture of Benwell and the *fac-simile* of a sketch made by himself of a jockey leaping a horse over a stone wall.

Birchall smiled grimly, and, walking over to a wooden bench, on which were seated two tramps, began to study the pictures, puffing mean time at his cigar. He expressed displeasure because his own picture did not come out clearly, and said that the picture of his wife was much better. He made laughing remarks about each sketch.

When he came to Benwell's portrait he passed it airily by and began talking about the next one. Presently he threw the paper aside and said: "I don't think I have been treated very considerately by the newspaper-men; they all seem to take it for granted that I am a very bad man. Why, there was a lawyer in Toronto who offered to defend me for nothing, and threatened that if I would not permit him to appear in my case that he would join forces with the other side and do what he could against me. But this didn't frighten me."

Birchall laughed and added: "Do I look like a fool?" He certainly did not. Then he bade everybody a cheerful good-night and sauntered lazily up-stairs to his cell.

On September 29th the trial came to a close.

VII.

THE VERDICT AND SENTENCE.

Long before 9:30 o'clock in the morning the court-house was surrounded by a crowd that completely blocked the entrance. Judge, jury, counsel, and all privileged persons had to gain entrance to the building through a side door.

The argument of counsel was over at last, and the Judge began his charge. It was strongly against the prisoner. While he spoke in grave, deliberate tones, Birchall, sitting in his accustomed attitude with his head resting on the edge of the box, looked calmly at the Judge.

At 9:53 the case was given to the jury. At 11:30 the jury had agreed upon a verdict. There was some delay before Birchall came in, handcuffed for the first time. His face was pallid, but not unusually so. When the jury was asked if they had agreed upon a verdict the foreman said they had.

"What is your verdict?" was asked.

"We find John Reginald Birchall guilty of the murder of F. C. Benwell," was the reply.

Birchall never flinched. One of the counsel for the defence asked for a poll of the jury, and as each man's name was called he arose and said "Guilty."

The Judge then asked the prisoner what he had to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him. Birchall arose in the box with his hands folded in front of him, the handcuffs having been removed. He was calm, confident, and firm, but his face was white. He said: "Simply that I am not guilty of the crime, my Lord."

Judge McMahon, first remarking that the verdict of the jury was in perfect accord with the judgment of the court, then pronounced the sentence of death upon John Reginald Birchall, that "he be hanged on Friday, the 14th of November next, between 8 and 6 o'clock."

Birchall remained standing while the Judge was speaking, and then with a bow he took his seat.

It was exactly midnight.

BIRCHALL'S IRON NERVE.

The Murderer Calmly Awaits the Last Act in an Eventful Life.

A special from Woodstock on Wednesday night says: As the hour for Birchall's execution approaches the excitement in his case deepens. He has only two more nights to live and is making the best of them. To-night he had the final interview with his wife and the parting was a touching one. By order of the Attorney-General an interview was granted and the devoted woman, who still believes in her husband although almost all the world is against him, spent four hours with him.

They had a long talk over different matters, and it ended with mutual tears and with messages from the doomed man to his friends in England and to his heart-broken sister and brother. Then followed one long, lingering embrace and look and Mrs. Birchall was led out of the cell and the dark stairway to look upon her husband no more in this life. She was driven to the hotel, where she spent the night in hysterics. Birchall returned moodily to his cell and sat for a long time meditating upon his hard fate and the terrible death that awaits him.

THE MURDERER DOWNCAST.

For the first time since he was incarcerated he appeared downcast. In a short time the Rev. Dean Wade entered the jail and spent the rest of the night with him. This afternoon the Sheriff ordered that Birchall's cell be changed, and his orders were carried out. This was to avoid any possibility of his having poison secreted in his cell, but there is not much danger, judging from Birchall's own arrangements, that he will end his life. This afternoon he expressed a strong desire that Turnkey Forbes and Mr. Leetham, his executors, attend the execution, rather a strange wish, but Birchall is a strange man and does not do things like other men. He loves to be startlingly original. He will die game, and will have little or nothing to say at the last moment.

During the day, before the final interview with his wife, he was very cheerful and chatted with his guards quite freely. He ate well, smoked several cigars, and appeared to take his execution resignedly. He is very much attached to Dean Wade and always inquires anxiously when he is to be with him again. During the day his wife received a great number of letters and telegrams from cranks addressed to her husband. Among them was a dispatch from a well-known private detective. It read: "Dear Rex. I have read yesterday's *Herald*. I forgive you, God bless you."

A PROFESSIONAL HANGMAN.

The hangman who will officiate is the same man who hanged Kane in Toronto and Smith in London, Ont., recently. He is a professional, and there will be little danger of any bungling. Everything in the jail is being put in a bright and clean condition in preparation for the execution. Prisoners have been at work all day with whitewash and scrubbing-brushes cleaning up the gloomy interior walls and corridors. The scaffold will be erected in the southeast corner of the western jail-yard, so that Birchall cannot see the structure from his cell-window before he dies.

Some workmen were engaged hammering this afternoon outside the building, and the noise jarred upon Birchall's nerves. He asked his guard if they were engaged in erecting the scaffold and quieted down when told that they were not. The Attorney-General has not yet given a decision on the question of allowing Birchall's body to be buried outside the jail walls. He will give his decision to-morrow. The general feeling here is that the body should be given to his friends for burial.

BIRCHALL'S GOOD HEALTH.

Dr. Rice, the jail surgeon, visited the prisoner last night and found him in the best of health. He is even stouter than he was at the trial, but his features are, if anything, paler. H. J. Finkle, his solicitor, had a long interview with Birchall in the afternoon with reference to the disposition of his assets. There was a rumor at midnight that Birchall and his wife had both committed suicide immediately after the final interview, but inquiry at the jail stamped it all false.

MRS. BIRCHALL'S GRIEF.

Mrs. Birchall is completely cast down as the fatal hour approaches for her husband to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. A reporter asked Mrs. Birchall: "Now that you know the worst, would it not be better to leave for England? The pain and anxiety will wreck you physically." She replied: "My life is blighted, and the future seems full of clouds. But I cannot leave the poor lad here all alone. Think how much more he would suffer if he knew I had left the country, left him to die alone. Oh, no, I must see the last, and let him feel I am not far away.

"You must have had a difficult task providing money for the trial and subsequent efforts?"

Mrs. Birchall's eyes filled with tears. "Yes, but what did it matter if I could save him or prove to him I was doing all I could? There is the $1,500 received by the poor fellow for this writing, and my lawyers, Messrs. Blackstock and McMurchy, were so kind and so liberal they could have taken it all, but refused. I hate money. It is the price of his life."

"What are your intentions as to the future?"

"Now that I know the worst I shall remain until all is over, and then—well, I have affectionate relatives in the old country and they will look after me."

Her eyes filled with tears and it was evident that a fearful mental struggle was going on.

An Incident on Broadway.
New York Sun.

First Truckman: Mehercule! Phaeton was an accomplished charioteer compared with you.

Second Truckman: O tempora! O mores! I, too, am a collegian. Where were you graduated from?

ENGINEERS TO LEAVE

CONVENTION HAVING ADJOURNED THEY GO AWAY THIS MORNING.

Branches of Science Discussed—Lunch at the Tredegar—Locomotive-Works and Other Places Visited.

The fourth session of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers was called to order at 9:30 yesterday morning by President Oberlin Smith, who announced the reading of the first paper, which was by Mr. Louis G. Engel and entitled "Hydraulic Hoisting Plant for the Pier of the Brooklyn Sugar-Refining Company. The plant is described at length. No discussion ensued on the paper.

The next one read was "Hydraulic Travelling Cranes." In the absence of the author, Mr. Erwin Graves, the paper was read by the secretary, Mr. Hutton. This paper would seem to be of especial interest in Virginia, where so many machine-shops are going up in which heavy weights are to be handled.

A paper on travelling cranes was also presented by Professor Sweet—The general subject of hydraulic travelling cranes, especially the power of resistance in the leather of the valve features involved in them was discussed by Messrs. Engel, Moore, and others.

ROPE DRIVING.

The paper on "Rope Driving" was not read, the author stating that he would not take up the time of the meeting by so doing. However, papers on the subject from Mr. Samuel Webber and Mr. T. Spencer Miller were read by the Secretary. These papers commended Mr. Hunt's contribution to the subject, but antagonized some of his positions. Mr. Scott A. Smith, of Providence, also read a paper on the comparative value of belting and ropes in driving.

Mr. Hunt rejoined and answered a number of questions. Mr. Grimm explained the conditions under which wire and manilla ropes respectively might be used to advantage. An interesting fact is that the papers of Messrs. Webber and Miller gave cotton rope the preference in rope driving.

Mr. John H. Cooper read his paper on "Accident-Preventing Devices for Machines." The paper anticipates accidents of various sorts, and suggests means of preventing them. One point upon which especial stress is laid is the necessity of vigilance on the part of both workmen and masters.

Mr. Joel Leon Gobeillo, of Cleveland, O., gave a very intelligent account of the numerous accidents that are liable to occur in wood-working establishments, and urged the importance of inventing protecting devices for planing-machines and circular-saws particularly.

CUTTING TEETH.

The next paper was on "New Process of Generating and Cutting the Teeth of Spur-Wheels," and was read by the author, Mr. Ambrose Swasey, of Cleveland, who exhibited examples of the process. The reading of the essay was greeted with loud applause, as was also his object-lesson. Mr. Swasey talks like a demonstrator of anatomy.

Mr. John T. Hawkins expressed the highest admiration for the process, as did Professor Denton. The latter was unqualified in his praise of it, and of Mr. Swasey, who, he said, had modestly kept his invention from the public, although it had been a success for three years.

Mr. Swasey was asked numerous questions, which he answered clearly and satisfactorily.

The paper of Mr. George H. Bissell, entitled "An Interesting Test with a Lubricant," was read by the Secretary, who also read one on the same subject from Professor Thurston, of Cornell University.

Anent experiments with lubricants, Professor Denton made some interesting observations.

Professor Denton's paper, "Performance of a 75-ton Refrigerating Machine of Ammonia-Compression Type," was read by the author. Professor Denton enhanced the interest in this subject by illustrations on the blackboard. He also read his paper on "Special Experiments with Lubricants," which was profusely illustrated. It was discussed by Mr. C. W. Mason, Mr. James McBride, and Mr. O. C. Woolson.

The Secretary read the paper of Mr. W. A. Bole, of Pittsburgh, entitled "The Single-Acting Compound Engine." No discussion.

RESOLUTIONS OF THANKS.

Mr. Woolson, from the Committee on Resolutions, presented the following:

Resolved, That the thanks of this society are due the local Committee of Arrangements—Messrs. Davis, Raynal, Archer, Brooks, Burgwyn, Delaney, Miller, Greenwood, Sherrill, and Simpkin—for taste and appropriateness in providing this beautiful assemblage-hall and in their untiring energy in providing for the comfort and pleasure of the delegates.

Resolved, That we recognize in all the efforts made by the committee for our entertainment a certain potential emanating from the ladies of Richmond.

Resolved, That we shall leave this city bearing with us a most happy remembrance of the hospitality extended us everywhere.

Adopted.

Mr. Herbert Gray Torry, of New York, moved that the thanks of the society be tendered to Hon. J. Taylor Ellyson, Mayor of the city of Richmond, for the noble and full-hearted welcome to the hospitality tendered by him in behalf of the citizens and for the freedom of the city so generously given. Our closer acquaintance with our friends of the South, he said, has not failed to impress us with the fact that they have entered upon an era of manufacturing prosperity which they richly deserve and which they are well qualified to carry forward to the betterment of their own city, the State, and the country at large, and which prosperity must be due largely to the knowledge, skill, and industry of the American engineers. Adopted.

GOVERNOR AND WIFE.

Mr. Holloway submitted the following:

"I am certain every one present who availed himself of the kind invitation of his Excellency Phillip McKinney and his estimable wife to attend a reception given in honor of the society in the historic mansion of Virginia's Governors will join in the resolution I am about to offer.

"That the thanks of the society, and especially of the visiting ladies, are hereby tendered his Excellency and his wife, not only for the opportunity of making a most pleasing acquaintance with themselves, as well as other prominent citizens, but for the opportunity of inspecting a mansion so full of historic memories, clustering around the home of a long line of Governors of a State that may proudly call herself the Mother of Presidents."

Adopted.

Numerous other resolutions of thanks were adopted, as follows: To the press, by Mr. Frank M. Henneway; the hotel, by Mr. Ambrose Swasey; Mr. Sutherland, by Mr. E. H. Munford; the railroads, by Professor Duston; Messrs. Burke and Hoen for *souvenirs*, by Mr. William Adams, of Virginia; the Tredegar Company, and the Richmond Locomotive-Works, by Mr. Albert Allison, of Pennsylvania; the Street Railway Company, by Mr. Andrew W. Campbell.

Special resolutions of thanks were also tendered Mr. C. P. E. Burgwyn and Mr. Lewis D. Crenshaw.

After some purely routine business the society adjourned to meet in June.

Around the City.

Immediately after the adjournment of the society the members and their ladies were taken in vehicles to the Tredegar Works, where they were first entertained by a handsome luncheon spread in the upper story of one of the machine-shops.

Full justice having been done to the refreshments, General Joseph R. Anderson stated that he had been asked to give a history of the Tredegar, but as that would involve a great deal of egotism he would confine himself to a few heads. He briskly sketched the establishment of the works by Mr. F. D. Deane, told how the name was gotten, and gave some details of its development in gun-manufacturing and marine engine-building before the war. His statement that he had never had a gun to burst upon him, and his allusion to the fact that the Tredegar had built the machinery and engines and armed the United States war-ships Roanoke and Colorado, elicited loud applause. He then spoke of the work of the company in equipping railroads and of the difficulties that beset them during the war, which necessitated the buying of a coal-mine and the establishment of blast-furnaces. His allusion to Mr. John F. Tanner was very touching, and he said that of those who started in business with him only two survived—Mr. Charles Campbell and Mr. Edward Wade—of both of whom he spoke in most affectionate terms.

AN HONOR TO THE COUNTRY.

General Anderson closed by proposing the following toast: "The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Renowned for the Practical and Scientific Acquirements of its Members—We Recognize It as an Honor to the Country."

Professor Oberlin Smith, president of the society, made a brief and witty speech in which he was loud in his praise of Virginia hospitality. He then called upon Professor Hution, who proposed the toast, "The Tredegar Iron-Works and the city of Richmond and its Ladies." This was greeted with three cheers and a tiger.

In response to loud calls speeches were made by Professor Denton, Mr. Holloway, and Colonel Archer Anderson. The latter was particularly eloquent in referring to the great Commonwealth of industry, and concluded by tendering the hospitalities of the Tredegar and inviting the visitors to follow him.

The invitation was accepted with alacrity by both ladies and gentlemen, and a thorough inspection of the works was made. On all sides both surprise and pleasure were expressed at their magnitude. One feature that seemed to elicit marked attention and awaken unusual interest was the horseshoe-machine.

THE RICHMOND LOCOMOTIVE-WORKS.

From the Tredegar Works the party were driven to the Richmond Locomotive-Works, where another revelation awaited many of them in the matter of the size of the plant and the character of the work turned out. Some time was spent inspecting the plant, after which the party visited the Lee monument, the reservoir, St. John's church, and other points of interest in the city. A great many of the engineers and more of the ladies expressed their admiration of the residential portion of the city.

OFF FOR NEWPORT NEWS.

This morning at 9 o'clock the engineers will leave the city *via* the Chesapeake and Ohio railway for Newport News, and after having inspected the wharves, piers, dry-dock, ship-yard, &c., will visit Lambert's Point and the Gosport navy-yard and be entertained by the Chamber of Commerce of Norfolk. From Norfolk they will go North *via* the Norfolk and Western road and the Atlantic Coast Line, passing through Richmond to-morrow evening.

A Complaint.

To the Editor of the Dispatch:

RICHMOND, November 12, 1890.

Is there no redress for the long-suffering citizens of Main street from Fifth to Seventh? For the last two months the street has been almost impassable.

Our houses and our lungs have been filled with the fine dust with which the new pavement is covered, and now after a week of exceptionally fine weather, when the sidewalk might have been repaired without much inconvenience to the people, now with the rain falling and every prospect of bad weather, the sidewalk is dug up and left, no sign of any work being done on it, and the people are to wade through the sand to get to their houses. The opposite side of the street was