

The Blenheim Swamp was a name of fear, especially to ingenious girls of sixteen. In the heart of it was the Bottomless Lake, the depths of which no plummet had sounded.

The lake was guarded by a tangle of trees and undergrowth. In summer time the birds and game had it all to themselves. On winter nights, when the moon was up, the whitened trees stood with outstretched boughs, like a convention of ghosts, or of shrouded witches.

A place to frighten children with, this Blenheim Swamp. "Hush," said the mothers, when the children are refractory, "hush, or I will take you to the Swamp, and lose you."

The place had a fascination for Lord Somerset. It could not have been pretty there, for Alice knew that he was married, and she was as good as she was pretty. He would spend hours talking with old Rabb, the German, who lived just outside the swamp, and whose habit was to "holer."

—as he said—when strangers were lost in its mazes, and then, if they didn't hear him "holer," 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. Did he know of any murders committed in the swamp? Well, no; but all he could say was that if he, Rabb, were ever tempted to commit murder, here is the place where he would commit it.

Lady Somerset had no desire to visit the swamp. Her husband, indeed, had never mentioned its name to her. But she had longed to pay a good long visit to the Falls ever since she came to the neighborhood of Niagara. And one day, to her surprise, his lordship determined to gratify her.

"Reginald," she said to him softly, as they walked along the trees on Goat Island. "I wish to heaven you wouldn't call me Reginald," he said, impatiently.

"We are far away from Woodstock," she replied, "and I am so tired of masquerading."

"You can't be more tired than I," said his lordship. "Why don't you go home, persuade your father to make it up with us, and send me money enough to keep up the style befitting my rank in the British aristocracy?"

And Mr. Reginald Birchall laughed, but not as he used to laugh in those by-gone days—before he was metamorphosed into Lord Somerset.

"Reginald, dear," she said, as they came nearer to the torrent, "I know from my sister that papa will not forgive us. He has heard so many things against you. Why can't we go to New York, resume your own name, and get something to do? I would do anything, anything, rather than live this life of deception; and you, with your education, and your drawing, and your knowledge of Greek, could easily get a clerkship somewhere."

"Fine use a clerk would have of Greek," sneered his lordship. "And a fine clerk Lord Somerset would make."

"But we must do something," pleaded the wife. "The little money which has come from your family through the agents will soon be finished. How can we get along then?"

"Sit down," said her husband, gruffly, and if the roar of this confounded water

And she hardly asked the question when she uttered a scream. She had been pushed from behind and felt herself falling into the torrent. Her husband caught her.

"Oh, Reginald, Reginald!" she sobbed, "who did that?"

"I did it, my dear Florence," said his lordship, sardonically. "And I did it just to show you how easily, in this convenient locality, a person who asks inconvenient questions may disappear. There, there, I'm only jesting. But my scheme is serious, terribly serious. And if your nerves are getting calmer, we'll take a carriage and drive to the Rapids, and on the way I'll tell you how I can maintain you in comfort, and live as a gentleman should live, until your pig-headed governor chooses to do the proper thing."

"Only half understanding, this poor wife allowed herself to be placed in a carriage. Still only half understanding, she listened to her husband's plans as they drove to the Rapids. He told her of the farm-pupil

were to dance there, led, of course, by Alice Smith, so engaged the attention of the three young men that they forgot the two shots altogether.

As for everybody else who lived in the neighborhood of the swamp, there was a function known as a "cheese-meeting" to be attended in the day, to say nothing of the dance at night. These two observances so exhausted the energies of the good people of Eastwood that nobody went into the swamp for four days after the hearing of the shots.

From that Monday, which was the seventh of February last, until the following Friday the snow and sleet fell upon the dismal swamp. Its desolation was complete. No sound was audible but the wind moaning among the trees. No signs of life were visible save a huge raven which flapped its wings and ominously croaked over an object that lay among the stumps.

Two young farmers, brothers, George and John Elveridge by name, had come into the swamp to chop wood. The croaking of the raven attracted their attention. They slowly advanced through the wood.

"There's something lying on a pile of saplings," said John.

"Stop!" cried George, sharply, peremptorily. "Don't stir a foot, John. Do you see what it is?"

And John Elveridge, frightened by his brother's earnestness, peered eagerly through the bushes.

"It's a man," he whispered.

"Yes," said his elder, "it's a man. There's been murder done."

Though the farmers stood so near the corpse, the raven had not flown away. It fluttered from tree to tree, on either side of the body, like a sentinel mounting guard over its lord.

"Shall we look at it, George?" asked the younger of the brothers.

"No, sircé," said George, "we'll get out of here as fast as we can. When murder's committed that's the time to look for a magistrate. Who knows that we mayn't be suspected ourselves?"

And with the croaking of the raven still in their ears, the men made for the road. Not far away they found Constable Watson, of Princeton, and with this official to represent the law, they returned to the spot where the body lay. It was the body of a young man, cleanly shaven and of dark complexion. The rize 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.

"Why, what is this?" cried the constable, pointing in astonishment to the clothing.

"Somebody has been at work with the scissors," said George. "Every mark on trousers, shirt, and vest has been cut away."

And the lining's torn out of the hat," said John.

"If we ever discover the fellow who did it, it won't be for lack of smartness on his part."

"Hello, look here!" cried the constable at this moment. And from under the dead man's head he picked up 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. The rize was buried in the Potter's Field.

The brothers Elveridge were not satisfied to leave the mystery unsolved. At dawn next day they were in the swamp again. They searched all around the spot where the body was found, and once more were about to relinquish the search when George, drawing his axe along the ground, suddenly found a cigar case.

He raised it to the light.

On it was inscribed the name: "F. C. Benwell."

Next morning there was a pleasant little breakfast party at Mr. Baldwin's boarding-house in the village of Niagara Falls. Mr.

"Birchall," cried Pelly, "why don't you say something? Why don't you do something? What can it mean?"

"Then you knew the man?" asked Mr. Baldwin, who had watched this scene in amazement.

"Knew him?" said Pelly. "Didn't you know that we knew him? Didn't you know that he was one of our party; that he left here with Birchall to look at a farm; and that Birchall came back without him?"

"Oh, come," said Birchall, with a touch of gaiety, "I hope you won't accuse me of knowing how Benwell came by his death."

"I don't say you do," said the young Englishman, terribly excited. "But I'll tell you this; that I believe you to be a fraud, and I believe that the farm which Benwell and I were to share with you doesn't exist at all."

"Which I don't believe," Betsey Prig, said Mr. Birchall, mocking, "that there

him? Who saw me come out? It is preposterous. They dare not even arrest me."

And now—

As he spoke the door was burst open. Chief Young of the Niagara Falls police, entered the room.

"Reginald Birchall," he said, "I arrest you for the murder of Frederick Cornwall Benwell."

III. FLY-LEAVES FROM A DIARY.

In prison, Monday, September 2, 1890, a. m. The trial begins today. For the space of nine hours I, John Reginald Birchall, am to quit this art-gallery, decorated with Titianesque frescoes and Rembrandt-like scenes, and receive the homage of Woodstock and the attention of the world.

What a magnificent thing it is to be a celebrity! I hear they have arranged telephones round the courtroom, so that everybody in the neighborhood may hear all that is going on. The London Times is to take a column of cabled matter every day; and the Paris Figure the same. My looks, my gestures, the fit of my trousers, the color of my tie, will be dis-

cussed tomorrow in St. Petersburg, in Calcutta, in Peking. Let me take down my looking-glass and adorn myself for the occasion.

"The culprit was worthy of that great presence," says Macrady of Warren Hastings. I, too, will be worthy of this great presence—not the herd of Woodstock farmers, but the innumerable spectators whose gaze is fixed on me all over the universe.

Florence! I suppose he will be in court. What a nuisance these women are! They sit whispering, blubbery, appealing for sympathy, when their proper attitude should be one of dignity. Still, Blackstock thinks my wife should be there; and I suppose he knows best. But I do hope she will be well dressed. There is nothing so distressing as a slovenly woman.

As for myself, Blackstock says that my safety is assured. There were so many suspicious characters in the swamp during the days Benwell lay there that no chain of circumstances can bind the crime around me. The jury will disagree, shall have six months more to decorate my cell with cuts of ballet-girls; then they will turn me loose to wrestle once more with fate.

Reginald Birchall is all right.

Same day, evening.—The first day's trial is over. I have come, seen, and conquered. All that Woodstock boasts of beauty and fashion was in the Town Hall. The ladies sent me flowers, notes of sympathy, and regarded me tenderly. If this lasts much longer, I shall be getting vain.

Only being tried in a theatre! Judge Mac Mahon, with his million-shill whippers, sits on the stage, like a chairman in a London music-hall. I expect his own minutes to rap for order, and say: "Gentlemen, the next on the programme will be the Sintered Milton, in their famous song, entitled 'Strolling along ficcally!'"

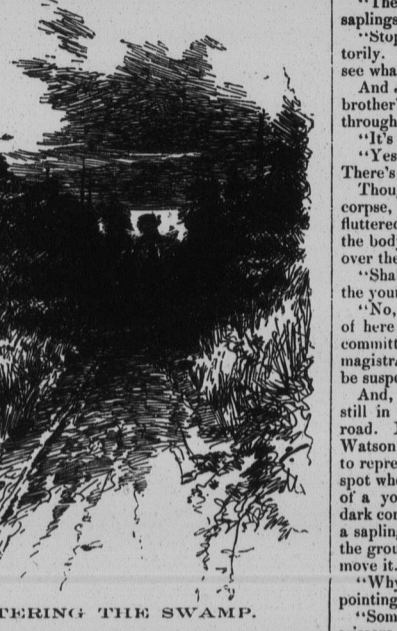
My reception was hardly as warm as I expected. The jurors merely stared. The ladies were visibly fluttered on my entrance. But, after all, my audience is not at Woodstock; it is everywhere.

Florence was there with her sister; she did not speak to me; didn't even look at me. She is miserable and pale. I wonder whether I ever loved her. I wonder whether, in my whole life, I ever had one unselfish thought or feeling. How that woman trusted me! How blindly she followed me through all the tortuous movements of my life; and the more I abused her the more she clung to me! I suppose I ought to give her some affection in return. How can I? I need all my affection for myself, and have needed it all my life.

This is a deplorable case. Osler, Crown Counsel, opened the case against me. Osler is bald. Osler has a thin, metallic voice. Osler has a lauk finger which he points at me unceasingly. But what puzzles me is how on earth Osler knows so much about me.

I was a fool to keep Benwell's gold pencil-case. I was an idiot to wear that Astrakhan cape at Eastwood. I was utterly idiotic when I overlooked the cigar-case, and left it in the swamp to damn me. And Pelly, too—how I hate him, with his good-looking, insipid face, and his blonde and his blonde mustache. Why didn't I notice his presence when Benwell and I were imitating each other's signatures? Why did I mention the presence to him on the boat, coming over? It is easy enough to ask these questions now; but if the case goes against me, and people think me a dot for not taking proper precautions, I'll reach England long before any letter that he could write. By the next mail I will send a spiteful letter to Benwell, signed Benwell, saying all is well. The old gentleman will reply with the draft; I can cash it at the Niagara Falls bank, where I'll get a small account immediately, and if trouble is made about it later, I can disappear.

What was the scheme? All I needed was Benwell's signature and Benwell's absence. But Ben-



ENTERING THE SWAMP.

system in Canada; told her how there was an abundance of wealthy English farmers eager to ship their boys off to Canadian farms, told her how the boys believed that an earthly paradise awaited them on the shores of Lake Ontario; told her how he proposed to secure at least a couple of these youths; told her how he would tempt them with glowing descriptions of horses, stables lighted by electricity, fast trotters, races, and high living; told her, with a chuckle, how disappointed they would be when they arrived.

And still she persisted with her question: "What will you do with them then?"

"They will go elsewhere," said he, turning his black eyes suddenly upon her.

"Oh, Reginald," she cried, "I entreat you not to commit this fraud. Who can tell what the end of it may be? If you still have a spark of love for me, I implore you not to do it."

"Florence, you're a fool," said his lordship, curtly.

And he looked down fixedly at the Rapids, which went hurrying on, like a soul in torment rushing to its destruction.

II. THE MURDER IN THE SWAMP.

A year has gone. The snow again whitened the boughs in Blenheim Swamp. A

never didn't exist no such person as Mrs. "Arrie."

"Good heavens! man," the landlord broke in, "can you sit joking there while your murdered man's body is being shovelled into a pauper's grave?"

"I accept the amendment," said Mr. Birchall. "Poor Benwell! I was really very fond of him. I will run down to Princeton and identify the body. Good-by, Florence."

Mrs. Birchall still sat rigid, white as death, and not a word she took her to her room, hardly conscious. When Pelly was left alone with her, he whispered: "I know what is in your mind, Mrs. Birchall; but, before Heaven, I believe him innocent; indeed I do."

And with this word of comfort, revealing that the same thought was in the minds of both, the kind-hearted young fellow set off for New York to see if Benwell could be there, as a telegram had led him to suppose.

Mr. Reginald Birchall returned from Princeton, having fully identified the body. He had shown such emotion when it was exhumed that a constable had to support him.

He went straight to his wife's bedroom. She shrank from his touch.

"Assassin!" she cried.

"You're a fool," said he, repeating the phrase that he uttered when he looked down into the Rapids.

"Reginald," she said, "I have been a true and faithful wife to you. I will be true and faithful to the end. Only let there be no deception between us. Tell me the whole truth."

He muttered, murmured, made two or three vain efforts to speak. Then, turning to see that the poor wife looked at her, he sat at the foot of the bed, and, walking up and down the little room, he told her the story of his journey with Benwell through Blenheim Swamp.

"Florence," said he, with a trace of unwelcome tenderness in his voice, "it had to be done. I was in the debt of a mole. My only chance was to get money from Benwell's father; my only hope was to put Benwell out of the way."

Mrs. Birchall covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

"I planned it on the Britannic, coming over," she continued. "I thought that Reginald might go over the Falls, and that the swamp would do for Benwell. When Benwell and I started out, a sort of exultation seemed to fill me. Some cruel devil possessed me; and as I went along in the train to Eastwood I could almost hear myself saying: 'Your time has come, friend Benwell; take a last look at the earth!'"

"Oh, horrible, horrible!" moaned the wife.

Birchall appeared to find some strange satisfaction in recounting his crime.

"As soon as we left the road and struck into the swamp," he said, "I took every precaution to see that the poor wife saw me. A living being was in sight. When we came near the lake, Benwell sat on a log, saying that he was fagged to death. I just made one step to the rear, put my pistol to his forehead, and fired. The body wheeled half round, before it fell, and the eyes met mine. For an instant I thought that the bullet had missed him. I nerved myself and fired again. He tumbled like a log at my feet. And as he lay on his back I looked at him again; and once more those gasty eyes gleamed into mine."

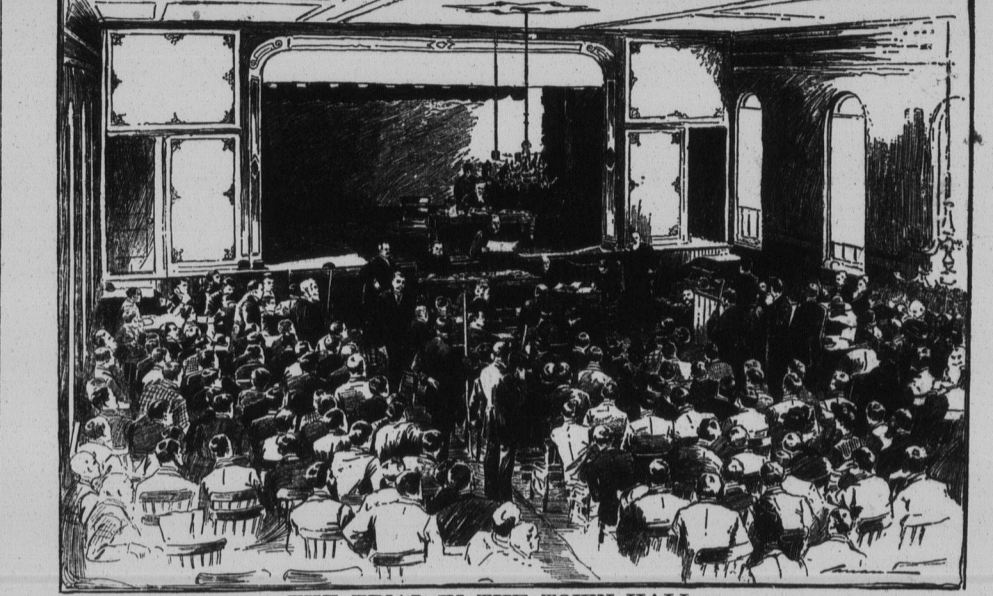
The wife sobbed convulsively.

"However," continued Birchall, as though describing an event of no particular moment, "it was now done. I borrowed those scissors of yours before starting. With them I cut all the marks from his clothing. There was nothing to identify him, nothing, nothing—that is," he added, "clenching his fist, "but that accused cigar-case."

"It will convict you," moaned his wife.

"Convict me? Pahaw!" said Birchall. "I have not laid plans so lightly as killing Benwell; take a last look at the earth!"

What motive can I have had for killing him? Who saw me enter the swamp with



THE TRIAL IN THE TOWN HALL.

surveyor who measured the distance from Eastwood to the swamp—the witness are working like demons to convict me; then the men who found the body, and then the men who buried it.

When they first began to go into details about—well, about what they found in the swamp—I confess I felt a kind of sickening, just the feeling that came over me when they exhumed the body. It isn't half so hard to kill a man as to look at him when he is dead; and if I get clear of this charge, those eyes that glared at me as he lay on his back amongst the tamaracs and cedars will haunt me till I die. One doesn't think of these things at the time. They are the penalty of murder after it is committed.

Be that as it may, everything seems to be going smoothly. Blackstock says that the jury can't convict on evidence so loose as this.

The shadow of the gallows is yet a long way off.

Wednesday, September 24th, evening.—I'm beginning to get dependent. All day long they have been keeping up a fusillade of incriminating facts. The doctors, boarding house keeper, pay-telegraph operator, postmaster, meteorological expert, and a shrewd number of people who talked to me at Princeton poured in their evidence. It looks black, black as thunder. Why did I spin so many different yarns about Benwell's whereabouts? If I had kept my mouth closed, they would never have suspected me.

If it all goes against me, Florence won't follow me. She knows where to get just what I want.

But have I the courage to run for it? It's easy, in court, with a multitude of eyes looking on, to show a courage that, in this solitude, with no company but the ballet-girls on the wall—the different, different altogether.

Thursday, September 25th, evening.—The farmers have had their sayings. They all remember the day of the murder by the holding of Duke's ball. I ought to have heard of that ball before. Were it not for a solemnity like that, I should so resemble another in the mind of these yokels that they couldn't possibly fix it in their memory.

The hand of destiny would, indeed, be shown if I were condemned to death because Mr. Jerry Dake, an insouciant, chose to give a dance on a certain night to the lady and ladies of Princeton.

Florence and I went to the dance on Tuesday evening of her, I suppose. But Alice Smith was there, racy and pretty as of old. I couldn't resist the temptation of speaking to her at Eastwood. Rex, Rex, when could you withstand the attraction of a fair young face? We all have to pay for it, one day or another; and that's the law, I suppose, my day.

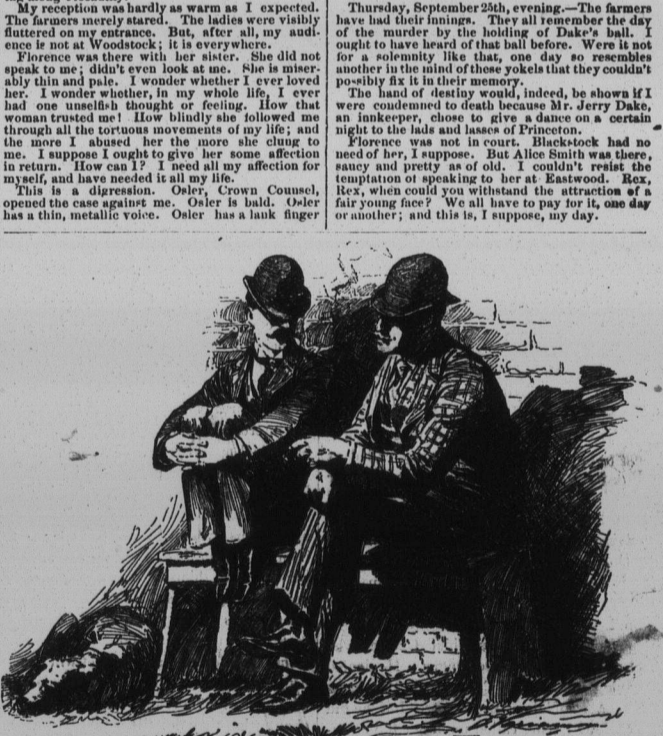
Friday, September 26th, evening.—Thank heaven, the defence has begun. Blackstock's idea, as I understand it, is to bring the jury. Those two fellows, Baker and Colwell, were hanging about the swamp and getting drunk. Why shouldn't the murder have been committed by them? Then there's John Dabb and Naches Schultz, the two men who heard the shot on Tuesday. It's evident they knew nothing of Duke's ball, and had nothing to do with the date by. Lucky for me that they hadn't.

Nothing yet from Florence; not a line; not a word, though my witnesses are beginning to testify. I feel desperately in the blues.

Saturday, September 27th, 2 p. m.—Half a session; nothing done. Two witnesses were sworn up at Woodstock on the day of the murder. I doubt if the jury believes them.

Sunday, September 28th, evening.—Day of rest for the lawyers, but no day of rest for me. Every hour of thought convinces me of the impotence of my defence. The jurors have made up their minds; I am satisfied that they will reach England long before any letter that he could write. By the next mail I will send a spiteful letter to Benwell, signed Benwell, saying all is well. The old gentleman will reply with the draft; I can cash it at the Niagara Falls bank, where I'll get a small account immediately, and if trouble is made about it later, I can disappear.

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BIRCHALL AND HIS JAILER IN THE JAIL YARD.

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WHERE THE MURDERED BENWELL WAS FOUND.

doesn't deafen you, I'll show you how we will get along."

Whereupon, the submissive wife having seated herself, his lordship produced the draft of an advertisement setting forth that a young University man, having a farm in Canada, wished to enter into partnership with a young Englishman of means.

"If that bait doesn't catch a gudgeon," said Mr. Reginald Birchall, "I have studied my countrymen in vain."

"But where is your farm?" asked the wife.

"In my mind's eye, Horatio," replied his lordship.

"But supposing you had persuaded some young man to come, what would you do with him when he was here?"

coating of muddy ice lay on the surface of the Bottomless Lake. Three farmers were trudging among the charred stumps, and pushing the tanglewood aside.

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

"Not I," cried John Higginson, following the trail just ahead of him.

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

"Guess it's John Rabb," said Fredenburg, listening a moment longer. "The old fool thinks we are lost. As though we were going to lose ourselves on the day of Duke's ball, eh, John?"

"The thought of the dance that was to take place that night at Jerry Dake's Hotel, in Princeton, and of the pretty girls who

Reginald Birchall, Mrs. Reginald Birchall, Mr. Douglas Pelly, a blond young Englishman whom they had brought from Liverpool, were discussing trivialities, while Mr. Baldwin was reading the morning paper.

"Well," said Mrs. 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—a—was the poor devil's name?" asked Mr. Pelly, languidly.

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

"Great God!" cried Pelly, rising hastily.

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

Mrs. Birchall sat white as death.

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BUTTERCUP, PO...
Buttercup, poppy, forget-me-not...
These three blooming in...
And once, all merry with...
A little one heard three...
Shines or shadow, sun...
O those child with the...
And laughing eyes—were...
Each an offspring, per...
The little one did not un...
But they bent and kissed...

THE DOWN...
Some for miles fr...
busy manufacturing...
is a row of small co...
construction, and hi...
excepting the low ren...
They are far from th...
public conveyance to...
so that only those w...
poverty to choose a...
there.

But each house h...
tached to it, with h...
some of these were...
with flowers. One...
under one of the b...
ing a house of chip...
touch them, but sep...
a man croaked, li...
prattle as eagerly as...
idiotism.

"If I touch any...
he'll eat us. Hannal...
younger of the chil...
three years old.

The other one, a...
maiden of five, answe...
"Men don't say boy...
say we must say...
Bates." And she s...
cross but sick or sorr...
"Mamma says not...
'cause it's stealing!'"

"We've got some...
'but mamma's so b...
poor."

And, indeed, there...
between the few pe...
Grey's garden and...
eye in the next one...
lived there alone, r...
seemed to have but...
was working in the...
every foot of it be...
flowers. That he al...
to every voice from...
seeming as close as...
to the open windows...

He had been three...
hours and listened...
as we must say...
gossip about Mrs. G...
sons pitying her...
her husband's failure...
loved by his death.

nah, the one servant...
across the street of...
had enjoyed only one...
waiting the poverty...
town, day after day...
to support her child...
from notice, Mr. Bates...
his neighbor as a dete...
man, bent over, as if...
pain, and his face, de...
stern, was shaded by...
abundant. Green esp...
pair of large, dark...
strangely as he listen...
Many times he ha...
speak to them, start...
drawing back with a...
better not!"

But on this day he...
bush of his rarest fl...
hands filled, with m...
fragrant mass over the...
of the astonished chi...
looked up, a face over...
them still more, on the...
This was the begin...
ship, and every day...
Evening found Mrs. G...
bedtime there was al...
of baby prattle, tell...
let the children wand...
and garden, in perfec...
stern, was shaded by...
thank him. She wou...
out of her own scanty...
neighborly help to hi...
but there was some...
face and voice that...
wondered even that...
afraid of him.

It was in Septemb...
time she, too, crossed...
garden, timidly, for...
little woman. Only...
she looked, in spite...
and pale, sorrowful...
Widowed and child...
stared in her childre...
ungrateful for kindne...
when they told her...
had "hurried his foot...
quered her shy timidi...
assistance.

"It was nothing," he...
as she entered the ba...
where he lay upon a...
bring him some dinn...
owing that the pain...
prevented his cooki...
children trotted to...
wait upon him, but he...
stern, was shaded by...
"Cyril, dear, get m...
of bread."

"What did you call...
ladyly."

Lady Godiva must have...
her stee as completely...
since Ayer's Hair Vigor...
amples are not so rare...
promotes the growth of...
silken texture.—Adv.

(Continued on Fourth page.)