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Mrs. M. Harvéy.

BIRCHALL.
HIS MORTAL CAREER
DRAWING TO A
CLOSE.

WOODSTOCK JAIL ECHOES.

On Saturday afternoon of last week Jailer Cameron received with several other letters and papers addressed to Rex Birchall, the condemned murderer now lying in the Oxford County jail, a letter in the white envelope of which was somewhat soiled. This letter was addressed as follows:

J. R. Birchall,
Woodstock Jail,
Woodstock,
Ontario, Canada.

The stamp was affixed on the bottom left corner of the envelope and the post mark, "Jackson, Mich., Oct. 21, 4:30 p. m., '00," was in the position usually occupied by the stamp. There was perhaps nothing unusual about this, but upon glancing over the contents of the four pages of closely pencilled note paper the jailer hurried to the prisoner Birchall's cell to allow him to read it. The letter was as follows:

JACKSON, Mich., Oct 5, 1890.
To "Rex," Well, Rex, my dear boy, I have been watching you ever since that fateful 17th of February and I see the Canadians have got you in their clutches at last. Well, I must say I am sorry for you, although you know you were partly to blame as well as me. You no doubt wonder where I am and where I went to after leaving you. You can bet I made quick tracks out of Canada, and have been around considerable. At present I am in Jackson, Michigan, where I intend to stay until about the middle of this month. I want post this letter until the day I leave here for fear some stray detective might get the drop on me. By the time you get this I will be where I will have naught to fear from Canadian or American law. I see by some of your own statements that you knew Benwell had a revolver. If you had told me that he had a revolver this whole business never would have happened, and you would have been a free man to-day. To make a long story short and as soon as I left you I began to see it was not going to be an easy job to get that fellow settled on a farm for even two weeks or any length of time. I never got up to that old rooster's with him, and don't think I could have fixed it anyway. It would have been easy enough if you hadn't told him that you owned the place. We struck into that notorious swamp just for fun to get a shot if we could see anything and while in there the devil seemed to come over me and I told him straight out that it was a clear case of swindle, told him that the whole farm pupil business in Canada was a swindle, and wanted him to chum in as he was well connected in the Old Country we could all make a big thing of it by using his name and get a lot on a string, and that what he would lose now would soon be made up again. Well Rex you ought to have seen him. Great Scott, didn't he set up steam; threatened to shoot me on the spot. He would too if I hadn't drawn my revolver. My blood was up too. I reasoned with him and did all I could to get him around, but no go. We talked the matter over for perhaps half or three-quarters of an hour, sometimes quietly, sometimes otherwise. At last he jumped up, said he would expose the whole damned lot of us and started for the road. I followed, and knowing what exposure would mean I settled it then and there. Now, you know it all. I'm sorry I did it, and never thought of getting you into trouble of the kind you now have. Forgive me Rex. His watch and revolver no one will ever see again. He didn't have much money with him. I should have thought that any damned fool of a lawyer might see that for you to kill him would spoil your chances of getting the boodle. I do hope the Canadian people will treat you fairly and at least give you a reprieve. If so I will write you again, and give you my address, and will expect to get a letter from you. Please burn this as soon as you read it, and don't give my true name to anyone. You have kept it to yourself well and I thank you. It would do no good now. I bid you a

long farewell, but still hope to see you in this world once more. I hope you are prepared for the worst. The love of money and excitement has caused me much trouble, but I hope to do better in the days to come. Good-bye.

Ever yours,
THE "COLONEL."
* P.S.—I saw that "smarty" we met in London last January has been trying to get his say in too. If I meet him out here he'll get a different box from the one you offered him in the theatre that night, and he'll get it just as cheap too.

After reading the letter Birchall's face assumed a pleased expression and he sent for his solicitor S. G. McKay. Mr. McKay went to London Monday morning and consulted with Mr. Hellmuth, another of Birchall's counsel, and it is altogether likely that a reprieve of a month will be asked for at once.

Birchall's explanation of this letter is that the "Colonel," between whom and Birchall, it will be remembered, certain telegrams or letters have passed, was a "pal" of his, and that the "Colonel" was taking Benwell up to a prominent Blenheim farmer, whom he said would, for a consideration, let on the farm upon which he lived (the farmer) was owned by Birchall. Benwell would pay over the money then, or get it from his father. Birchall professes to know the Colonel, and calls him sometimes Graham and sometimes Jones.

The Sentinel Review reporter was the first newspaper man to see the letter. The envelope bore the Woodstock post mark, Oct. 25th, (Saturday). The paper used was linen note paper. There were two sheets closely written on both sides. The writing is plain and small. A noticeable fact is that although dated October 5th, the letter was not mailed until the 24th October, which would be corroborative of the statement in the letter that the "Colonel" would remain in Jackson until about the end of the month. Certain expressions in the letter are very similar to what have been used by the prisoner, but as all his correspondence is examined by Gaylor Cameron it would be somewhat difficult for him to get such a letter out of the jail.

[NOTE.—Since the above was written members of The S. R. staff have carefully compared this "Colonel" letter with some letters of Birchall in our possession. There is a remarkable similarity in the hand. In parts of the Michigan letter there is an evident attempt to change or conceal the writer's hand; while some distinctive words and letters both show an identity of hand that is remarkable. In a word, the writing in this "Colonel" letter more closely resembles one of Birchall's undoubted ones than the latter does another one of his in our possession.—Ed.]

WHAT IS KNOWN OF THE COLONEL.
A special despatch from Montreal appeared recently in some daily papers, which refers to "The Colonel" the writer of the above letter to Birchall. The dispatch says:

A well known Montreal gentleman named Stevens, the proprietor of the Hope coffee-house in this city, tells the following curious story about Birchall the condemned Woodstock murderer. In January last Mr. Stevens was in London, and met the Birchalls at Morley's hotel, on Trafalgar square, where all of them had rooms. On the day of Lord Napier's death he was taking breakfast in the hotel dining room, the companions at his table being Birchall, Benwell, and an American, who was supposed to have come from the Southern States and was called Colonel. At that time he did not know any of them but he did subsequently. They impressed him in London together, and as he did not see Benwell after that he thought the latter had left the metropolis for the place where his people lived. On the morning in question the trio were waiting for their breakfast, and while keeping up a loud conversation, ordered some beer in the meantime. The loudest talker was the so-called "Colonel," a thick-set man of about 45 or 50, with a smooth-shaven face, heavy jaw, and dark moustache, and who wore on almost every occasion a big medal with an eagle on it at the end of a long ribbon, probably a Grand Army medal, on the breast of his black frock coat. Though taking a dislike to the supposed warlike, Mr. Stevens was as civil to him as circumstances compelled him to be, and during a general discussion which ensued he stated in reply to a question that he came from Canada, upon which Birchall, referring to his former visit to this country, immediately expressed his delight at meeting him. That same evening Birchall gave proof of his natural inclination to lie by telling Stevens as he was a stranger, and the fact of his (Birchall's) father being a speculator in theatrical enterprises gave him exceptional advantages in the theatrical line, he should be delighted to get him passes for any theatre he might wish to attend. The offer was declined, but some nights after, when Mr. Stevens was attending a performance at the Gaiety, he met Birchall and the Colonel between the acts in the foyer, and received an invitation to join them and Mrs. Birchall in their box, which, however, he declined, because of some friends he had with him. He met Mrs. Birchall twice, and found her a nice kind of woman, but who evidently entirely relied upon and confided in her husband. During their acquaintance he also had a private chat with the Colonel in the course of which the latter told him that he represented a syndicate of car-builders, who had built a car that was much lighter and would carry considerably more than the average, and that he hoped through Birchall's influence to have his father-in-law, Mr. Stevenson, give their car a trial in England, as in that case their fortune would be made. Strange to say though they left for Canada only a week after him, they never mentioned to him their intention of doing so.

Mrs. Birchall received a day or two ago another alleged confession, this time from a lady in the States, who said she had shot Benwell. She is a crank.

If the public knew much more about the jail life of J. Rex Birchall it will not be the fault of the inspector of prisons. He was here on Saturday and poked up the jail officials with a sharp stick. He directed that hereafter no reporter should be allowed into the jail so long as Birchall is there, and no manuscript is to be allowed to pass from the prisoner to any newspaper or newspaper representative. Mr. Cameron, the jailer, declares that he will enforce the order rigorously and "fire" every reporter who presents himself. This regulation applies of course to the manuscript of Birchall's autobiography a portion of which the prisoner has still to get off his hands. Whether or not Mr. Cameron is responsible for supplying any of the information published in the newspapers, he is apparently held responsible, for the inspector has directed that after this all mail matter for or from Birchall shall pass through the hands of the crown attorney, instead of the jailer.

A Woodstock paper publishes a statement to the effect that Alice Smith and Ellen Fallon, two important witnesses at the trial, heard a portion of the evidence by telephone before being called. Inquiry confirms the report. The day before they were put in the witness box both witnesses spent about two hours at the Thompson House, where telephones had been fitted up for public use, listening. The story has been inquired into by Mrs. Birchall, who allows nothing to escape investigation.

Dr. Richardson, the well-known Professor of Anatomy in the University of Toronto, was one of the witnesses for the defence in the Benwell murder trial. The doctor had been going over all the evidence in the case very thoroughly and had come to the conclusion that Benwell had been stunned before he was shot. It will be remembered that the doctors who made the post-mortem testified at the inquest that they found the external gun shot wound but no other external bruises. However, when they opened the skull at the top of the head they found on the inner side of the skull bones signs of a bruise and all the tissues below it torn. Such an internal wound without external appearances could only have been made by a heavy blow with a stick or, still more likely, a sandbag, which gives such a wound. The doctor is now convinced that Birchall first stunned Benwell and then shot him after he had fallen down. This theory, says Dr. Richardson, is the only one to account for the fact that the two bullets were put into the one hole. This would have been impossible if the victim had not been lying on his face on the ground, for if he had been walking and shot from behind he would certainly have immediately fallen forward, and the second bullet would have hit in some other quarter. If this theory is correct it completely upsets the Colonel's story that he shot him as he was walking along, for no marksman, however expert, could achieve the feat of putting two bullets into the same wound in a walking or falling body.

Birchall continues cheerful. His appetite is still very good, but he is growing somewhat dissatisfied with the canned fish diet, which now constitutes a large portion of his bill of fare. He is still loath to allow the chance for a joke to pass, and the other day he remarked that unless he got something else to eat he would soon be covered with scales. He declares that he is not afraid of death, and would not dread the execution were it not for his wife. The contract for the erection of the gallows has been let to Mr. Craib, of Woodstock. It will be of the modern kind, consisting of two upright beams with a cross beam on top, the jerk being produced by the falling of a weight.

Monkton.
A great deal of shooting is done by local sportsmen just now.

Mr. Harris has been re-engaged as chessmaker for next year. No better choice could have been made.
On Thanksgiving Day a union service will be held in the Presbyterian church. Rev. Mr. Brandon will occupy the pulpit.
It is rumored that Mr. Huggins has disposed of his village lot to Mr. Horn, of Logan. We welcome Mr. Horn to our midst fully believing that he will be a valuable citizen.
There was no service on Sunday morning in the Methodist church as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was being dispensed at another appointment on the circuit.
We are happy to learn that those who annoyed the speakers at the Presbyterian social did not belong to this village. In a Monkton audience the disturbing element is never native but is imported from a neighboring burgh.

The school was closed on Thursday and Friday of last week in order to allow Mr. Tier to attend the Teachers' Convention in Stratford. Some teachers have abundance of holidays without thus breaking into the middle of the term to have a good time.

The bachelors of this vicinity evidently believe in taking things by the forelock or why would they have formed what they call "The Bachelor's Protection Union." The object of this Association it appears is two-fold, 1st, To protect single men from the jeers of angry women and the taunts of unsympathetic married men, 2nd, To lead young men along the straight but pitted path of single life. With a view of the boundary, as the saying is, his neighbor, is Mr. Wm. J. Murray, of the vacant lot, is secretary. The officers of the Society are aware that they will have to face the scolds of a cold world but they are borne up by the righteousness of their cause. Your correspondent hopes to be able to report all the meetings.

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