

“The Wellington-Street and Georgina Murders,” *The Globe*, March 5, 1859, p. 2.

The Wellington-Street and Georgina Murders.

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**THE CONVICTED MURDERERS!**

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 THEIR CONDUCT IN PRISON!

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 Fleming’s Life, Written by Himself.

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 Last Moments of the Condemned Culprits.

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 THE WHITCHURCH MURDER.

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 CONFESSION OF HUGHEY.

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 The following account of the execution of the two culprits above-named appeared in a second edition of yesterday’s *Globe*. Subjoined will also be found statements made by Fleming and Hughey to Mr. Davey, Wesleyan City Missionary, who has handed them to us for publication. Hughey, it will be remembered, was condemned to death for the murder of William Ramsay in Whitchurch; but had his sentence commuted to imprisonment for life.

BEFORE THE EXECUTION.

The morning broke dark and gloomy, and with the first faint streaks of early dawn the workmen were industriously employed in making ready the scaffold. The ghastly though business-like machine, was built nearly in the centre of the west wall, the top of which formed its central support, the sides being made to rest upon posts driven into the ground both within and outside of the prison yard. The wall is about 14 feet in height, and the platform was reached by a steep ladder, raised at the side.

Lowering and portentous as were the clouds, the apprehension of a storm of wind and rain had little, if any, effect in keeping back the very dubious characters who are always to be found at executions. The drenching rain of the previous day and night, combined with the trampling of feet, had occasioned a complete slough in the vicinity of the scaffold; nevertheless, great numbers of persons of both sexes took up their position in front at an early hour, and remained there till late in the forenoon.

At about half-past 7 o’clock, O’Leary’s sister was permitted to see him, although it was thought that Thursday’s visit was her last, but the unhappy girl would not be contented unless she again cast her eyes on her unfortunate brother. The interview was painfully affecting. They threw themselves into each other’s arms. His sister’s distress deeply moved the heart of O’Leary. He cried bitterly, and deplored his unhappy fate. The Rev. gentleman again prayed with the culprit, until about half-past 9, when the executioner made his appearance to perform the task of pinioning. He bore the trying operation with great fortitude, after which, at the earnest solicitation of his sister, she was again admitted to the cell. She was now more composed, and prayed with her brother, after which they took leave of each other for ever in this world. She then left the prison; but shortly afterwards returned to the door, crying bitterly.

Fleming also underwent the ordeal of pinioning with much firmness.

HOW THE CONVICTS SPENT THE NIGHT.

To all appearance the wretched men passed the midnight hours—their last on earth—in a composed and tranquil state of mind. Fleming was attended throughout the night by Mr. Davey and

others, with whom, until four o'clock, he engaged in fervent prayer. He then expressed a wish to rest himself for a while, and having thrown himself upon the bed, the gentlemen left him. He slept peaceably until half-past six, when he again awoke and once more received the consolations of religion. Shortly before eight o'clock he was visited by the Rev. Mr. Marling, who remained with him until he had done with everything pertaining to this world.

The other culprit, O'Leary, sat up throughout the night. At ten o'clock he asked for a light, saying that he could not sleep, and he continued in silent meditation and prayer until about half-past six in the morning, when Father Rooney was admitted into his cell, and the rev. gentleman attended him in his last moments.

### THE EXECUTION.

Soon after eight o'clock, the Sheriff and Deputy Sheriff arrived at the gaol, and the next hour-and-a-half was occupied in making the remaining preparations for the execution. Mr. Jarvis mounted the scaffold in order to see that all was secure; the ropes were brought; firmly knotted and hung athwart the beam, much, as it would seem, to the gratification of the crowd without, as testified by the noise they made. Several gentlemen, who ventured to show their heads above the wall, learned conclusively that their personal appearance was by no means such as to prevent the possibility of their being mistaken for criminals of the worst kind.

As the morning wore on, the clouds became a little less threatening, and the sun breaking through the gloom, banished for a while the thought of rain; a few minutes before ten o'clock, however, a heavy shower fell, but it lasted only a few moments. The time fixed for the execution of the condemned men was between eight and ten o'clock, but Mr. Jarvis determined to give them as long to live as possible, it was not until a quarter to ten o'clock that they were led out to execution. Fleming, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Marling and Mr. Davey, walked first, followed by O'Leary, attended by the Rev. Mr. Rooney and the officers of the law. The countenances of the prisoners appeared frightfully pale, but they walked with firm steps to the scaffold. Fleming mounted first and without hesitation; but when O'Leary came to the ladder, he manifested a slight reluctance, which was however but momentary, and he then steadily ascended to the fatal drop.

On reaching the summit, the miserable felons were conducted to the places assigned them under the beam—Fleming being on the north, and O'Leary on the south side. The clergymen stationed themselves by the side of the culprits; the hangman being close at hand. This latter functionary was dressed in light clothing, and wore a large mask. It is stated that he was committed to gaol a short time ago on a charge of disorderly conduct. He will receive about \$80 for his unenviable work.

Father ROONEY then addressed O'Leary, and said:—John O'Leary, do you wish to say anything before undergoing the punishment of the law?

O'LEARY replied by reading to the crowd, in a loud, firm tone of voice, a written statement, which was in effect as follows:—My dear friends,—The report having gone abroad in the newspapers that I have not expressed contrition for my sins, and that I have made no confession, I beg leave to contradict it before you all. From my inmost heart I do feel contrition for all my sins, and particularly for the crime for which I am now about to offer my life, and for which I would resign a thousand lives if I had them. For what is this life to the life in the world to come? I also tell you, my dear friends, that I have made my confession with, I hope, as good a disposition as I was capable of, as far as a human being could do. And I would not at this moment change my position for that of the Queen of England, because I feel confident that I am prepared—I hope [illegible]t my Creator with a clear conscience. Therefore I trust in His great mercies, as I will participate in His glories before the setting of this day's sun. I humbly beg, therefore, my dear friends, that you will pray to the Lord that He may have mercy on my soul!

To this request the spectators with one voice responded—"Amen."

Father ROONEY.—Now kneel down and make an act of contrition.

O'LEARY did so, and on being asked if he wished to say anything more, he replied that he did not.

Father ROONEY—Are you satisfied with the efforts made for you by your friends?

O'LEARY—I am. The wretched man and the priest then knelt in prayer, whilst the executioner adjusted the rope. That having been done, the culprit said—I forgive everybody in this world, and I hope the Lord will have mercy on me. My dear friends, pray, I beseech you, that the Lord may have mercy on my soul!

The people murmured a response to this petition, and a woman in the crowd exclaimed,—“May the Lord in heaven have mercy on his soul!”

The malefactor and Father Rooney prayed together until the fatal bolt was drawn.

In the meantime, Fleming knelt in silent prayer beside the Rev. Mr. Marling, and he continued his devotions until the hangman had performed with regard to him the dreadful office which he had discharged in reference to O'Leary. But Fleming said not a word that was audible a few steps from him. Everything being ready for the execution, there was a shout from below,—“Pull the cap over their eyes!” The executioner did so. The St. Lawrence Hall clock at that instant pealed forth the hour of ten. The Sheriff gave the preconcerted signal—the bolt was withdrawn—the bodies fell with a dull, heavy sound, which sent a shudder through all who heard it—there were a few struggles—and all was over: the wretched men had paid the fearful penalty of their crimes.

The bodies remained suspended for a little over half an hour, and were then lowered, placed in plain coffins, and removed to the hospital within the prison. A *post mortem* examination was afterwards made by Drs. Richardson and Bethune, when it was found that the necks of both men were broken. The appearance of the bodies evidently showed that both of them must have expired instantly. The brain of each was weighed, when that of O'Leary was found to be 3 lbs, and that of Fleming 3 lb 4 oz. The body of O'Leary was claimed by and handed over to his brother-in-law and sister in the afternoon, and conveyed from the prison in a hearse. That of Fleming not being claimed by his father, Rev. Mr. Marling took charge of the body, so that it might receive decent burial, at the request of a number of those who had interested themselves in behalf of the unfortunate youth during his life. The remains was removed to the Necropolis in the afternoon.

Fortunately, executions are not of frequent occurrence in Canada; and this being the case, it was feared by many that some accident might happen through a want of experience. The fear was groundless; all the arrangements being as complete as if the officers of the law were thoroughly *au fait* in such matters.

#### OUTSIDE THE GAOL.

The crowd outside the gaol had appeared a good deal excited as the hour approached, and every portion of the work on the scaffold was watched with great interest. The placing of the cross beam, and more especially the attaching of the ropes, created quite a sensation; the length of the drop eliciting much remark. At this stage of the proceedings, some unseemly conduct took place among the multitude, every one being anxious to secure the best place to view the awful tragedy about to be enacted. Pushing, and crowding, and hooting was the result. Many, who had taken their stand on wagons and on large piles of stones near the scaffold, were, by the swaying of the crowd, forced from their stations, when down they fell amid the mud, giving on each occasion the signal for a cheer and a loud burst of laughter. The most noticeable fact outside, perhaps, was the large number of females present. Old women with their gray hairs, mothers with babes in their arms, young women and girls, all were represented. As usual a great number of those who are known as “unfortunates” were present, but hundreds were to be seen, who certainly belonged to a better class of society. So far as the male portion was concerned, the merchant and labourer competed for the best place to get a sight of the grim preparations, while the light fingered gentry were as usual moving about, attempting to ply their vocation even here—beneath the gallows. It did not transpire whether they were successful to any extent in their nefarious attempts, but it appeared from their movements that they were on the alert. The detectives being about in plain clothes, no doubt had a salutary effect.

Immediately after the unfortunate men had been launched into eternity, the greater portion of the vast multitude quietly dispersed. Many, however, lingered to see the bodies cut down and the scaffold removed.

About thirty of the new police were present at the scene, under charge of the three sergeants major, to preserve order.

#### THE CHURCH STREET MURDER.

It appears likely that Fleming knew something about the death of Cunningham, who, it will be remembered, was found shot in an alley leading from Church-street some months ago. He stated to the Rev. Mr. Marling that William McKay (of the Young Canada saloon) and Cunningham, had, early in the evening, been drinking at the Peru saloon; the latter having in his possession some fifteen or sixteen dollars. McKay, with others, stopped at the Peru until near midnight. Cunningham left some hours previously, and was not again seen until met by Fleming and McKay as they were proceeding down Colborne-street home, when they found him staggering along the side-walk, evidently intoxicated. McKay offered him assistance, and leaving Fleming alone, the pair passed on to the alley where the body of Cunningham was afterwards found. They had not long been absent when Fleming heard a shot fired; and McKay immediately afterwards made his appearance, running at a rapid pace. Fleming asked what was the matter, but was told, with an oath, it was none of his business. This statement was communicated to the Police Magistrate, and also to the Attorney General, both of whom pointed out that it was perfectly valueless, as there was no witness to corroborate the story. It is not altogether improbable that the prisoner thought, by making some statement of this kind, that the Executive might be induced to reprieve him, at least for a time. If so, the result has proved he was wrong in his calculations.

#### STATEMENT OF FLEMING.

The subjoined letters, containing an account of Fleming's life, and his religious sentiments and feelings, were written by him in his cell, according to their respective dates; and, by his own request, are now published:—

Toronto, February 24, 1859.

My short experienced of the consolation of true religion, and the workings of the Spirit of God on the human heart, is briefly this:—Since my arrest, I have read the Bible over twice. I was fully convinced, by the grace of God, of the errors of the religion in which I was brought up. What few doubts remained on my mind were removed by the kind instructions of Mr. Stewart, (city missionary,) who has been visiting me for some time. Mr. Davey, (Wesleyan city missionary,) also, has administered religious consolation. I feel now that I am a different person in every respect, to what I was when in the world. I see things of this world in a different light to what I formerly did. I see that this life is but a resting place, to prepare us for a better and more glorious world, where we shall have life everlasting, if we but serve God here on earth, the short time we have to stay here. I feel that our Lord Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that by his blood alone I can be saved, from everlasting destruction. I forgive my enemies freely, as I hope to be forgiven. I feel I have been a great sinner, and do not deserve to be among the blest; but still I hope that the Lord God will show mercy even unto me, if I but trust in his all-merciful power. I feel there is consolation anywhere where the Spirit of God's grace is. Even in this cell, I rest easier than I did at first, and feel perfectly reconciled to any fate which it may please God to bestow upon me.

JAMES FLEMING.

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Toronto, March 2nd, 1859.

I was born in Galway, in Ireland, of Roman Catholic parents. I was educated in a common school in Ireland, and in a Jesuit school in Toronto. I was brought up a Roman Catholic. I left Ireland about

1850, and came to New York and Toronto. I left school at 15 years of age, and went in the capacity of a “messenger boy” in the Grand Trunk Telegraph Office, Toronto. I was shortly promoted from “message boy” to that of attending the Battery, and from that to “assistant bookkeeper.” I had about this time learned to operate, and was then promoted to the capacity of assistant telegraph operator. About this time I had commenced reading novels and bad books, and going to theatres; also indulging sometimes in taking a little liquor. I have never been really intoxicated in my life more than three or four times. I am now fully convinced that those practices, along with getting into bad company, have brought about my ruin. I would here advise all young men that carrying deadly weapons will be their ruin, as it has been mine. Take my advice, as one at the point of death, and do not indulge in any of the above-mentioned practices, as you value your life or liberty. After my arrest, I bless God that I ever saw Mr. James Davey, who gave me good advice and religious instruction. The first time he came to the gaol while I was there, he called me to him,—while I was leaning against one of the pillars, smoking and chatting to the prisoners—and advised me to repent of my sins, and make my peace with God. I answered him evasively, not exactly understanding the plan of salvation at the time. I noticed him at my trial, sitting a short distance from me, and was happy to see him. The next visit I had from him was a few days after the trial. I now began to see my full necessity of repentance, while convinced by the Spirit of God of sin, righteousness, and of the judgment to come. I commenced to pray and ask mercy from God. Mr. Davey continued visiting me, and on February 11th, while he and Mr. Willis were reading the Scriptures and praying with me, I was enabled to roll my guilty soul upon Christ as the Saviour of mankind. When I got off my knees in the cell, I was enabled to say that God, for Christ’s sake, had pardoned all my sins; and I told them and the turnkey, at the time, that I was not afraid to die that moment. I have been endeavouring from that time to the present to believe in Christ, to the salvation of my soul. I also have to tell you that I feel earnestly for O’Leary, who is in the next cell to me, and have prayed to God to have mercy upon and save him. The few hours that I have to live, I am trying to look to God for a deeper baptism of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that He may grant it to me for his name’s sake! I sincerely hope that Mr. Davey and I shall meet each other in the kingdom of heaven.

JAMES FLEMING.

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#### STATEMENT BY WILLIAM HUGHEY.

The man whom I murdered first came to my house as a boarder, and after some time living with me obtained such power and influence in the family, that his word was sooner obeyed than my own. Intimacy having arisen between him and my wife which I thought too familiar, I ordered him to depart, which he failed to obey. I was accustomed to drink occasionally. I have led a very sinful and wicked life. About nine years ago, I became the subject of religious impressions, and experienced a change of heart, which lasted for three years. This change was brought about at Love’s Wesleyan Methodist Meeting House, King, Canada West. During this time I met in class, but on moving to Whitchurch, I discontinued it; and from this period of my life I date my backsliding from God. After this I indulged in liquor more freely than before, and in some measure discontinued attending public worship. The man Ramsay and my wife used to walk out together frequently; but notwithstanding this, I never suspected that anything was wrong till I was informed of it by my children. About harvest 1858, I reproved my wife for her conduct toward Ramsay, but abuse and misconduct were the result. A “chopping bee” was held at our house the day previous to that on which the fatal act was committed, but Ramsay was not there till the evening, when whiskey was freely used by nearly all, I myself becoming intoxicated to unconsciousness. The whiskey was brought by Ramsay and my son in the afternoon. No ill feeling perceptibly existed among any of the company throughout the evening. A little before dawn on the following day (the day of the murder) I retired for a while to rest, and after rising, again asked for whiskey, which I then drank, and seeing it was done, desired to go four miles to Mitchell’s Corners to buy more, but having no money, and my relative not supplying me with it, I was compelled to desist from drinking. My mind, excited by drink

and jealousy, was everything but in a proper frame. Ramsay at this time was cutting shingles. I was doing nothing. I know nothing of taking the axe, nor have I any recollection of striking the man. After the blow had been given, my wife screamed loudly, which brought me to a little. Ramsay walked across the room to the bed, where he laid himself. I then retired and rested myself for a little while, during which time the doctor arrived. I then felt conscious I had done the deed; but I am convinced I did not do it with any intent to kill him. The act was committed at nine in the morning, and after dark I was arrested. Ramsay lived till half-past four P.M. I was immediately conducted to Toronto goal. After my trial, Mr. Davey, Wesleyan City Missionary, visited me, and faithfully spoke to me about my soul. I was hard, but at and after prayer, weeping was mixed with my misery. The second visit he brought me a Testament and a pair of spectacles. I immediately read the Word of God, and the Spirit of God revealed to me that I was a vile and miserable sinner. On Friday, 11th February, Mr. Davey and Mr. Wallis were present, and during their stay I was enabled to cast my all upon the atonement of Christ, then and there realizing I was a sinner saved by grace divine. I still feel happy in the love of God, and now experience such a change as must be felt by the soul, it being beyond description. I am prepared for the worst, God is my help and support. I am determined to cling to Christ, and show by my walk and conversation that I am born from above. I look to Jesus the Friend of sinners, that I may be kept. I would humbly return my sincere and heartfelt thanks to His Excellency the Governor General and his advisors, for the especial Executive clemency with which they have been pleased to favour me in my awful extremity. I also thank my friends of Whitchurch for getting up a petition in my behalf. The Lord reward them abundantly for their kindness.

In the hands of God I owe my conversion to my brother, Mr. James Davey's instrumentality, and bless God that ever he was commissioned to publish to me the good news of salvation from sin through Christ Jesus.

Many kind friends have visited me during my confinement, some of whom are now witnesses to these few lines. I pray God to bless all, even mine enemies.

his  
WILLIAM x HUGHEY.  
mark

Corridor, west wing of Toronto Goal,  
4<sup>th</sup> March, 4½ o'clock, A.M.

Before

JAMES WALLIS,  
JOHN ROGERS,  
JAMES DAVEY,  
JOS. HIGGINBOTHAM,  
W. HY. JEFFERY.

“Execution of Dr. King at Cobourg,” *The Globe*, June 10, 1859, p. 2

EXECUTION OF DR. KING AT COBOURG.

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HIS CONFESSION.

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**5,000 PERSONS PRESENT!**

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(From our Special Reporter).

COBOURG, June 9.

The execution of Dr. W.H. King, for the murder of his wife at Brighton, by poison, on 3d November last, took place at Cobourg this morning, shortly after eight o'clock, in presence of upwards of 5,000 spectators, about one-tenth of whom were females and children. The scaffold, which was manufactured in Toronto, was similar in appearance to that used at the execution of Fleming and O'Leary, in March last. It was erected immediately in front of the Court-house and gaol, which is situated about a mile north from the town. During the time of its erection on Wednesday, large numbers of persons visited the place to watch the operations of the workmen. Carriages, waggons, and other vehicles, began to arrive in the town, filled with well-dressed men and women from the country adjoining. Every train which stopped at Cobourg, in the evening, brought its quota, and near midnight there could not be less than a thousand people walking about, or “camping out,” in the vicinity of the scaffold. The arrangements of Mr. Sheriff Fortune were of the most excellent description. To prevent disorder, he caused a strong barricade, about four feet high, to be erected in front of the Courthouse, which had the effect of keeping back the crowd, and prevented unnecessary crushing. When day dawned, a perfect stream of waggons, filled with people, poured into the town—some of the parties coming upwards of forty miles to witness the execution. A number of Indians, with their squaws and papooses, were also on the ground. The crowd behaved in the most orderly manner—in fact, much more orderly than is general on such occasions; and everything passed off in a manner befitting such a solemn occasion. It was, however, to be remarked that scarcely a single individual in the crowd appeared to feel any commiseration for the wretched criminal who was so soon to die before their eyes; all apparently seemed to think and say that he deserved his fate.

THE CRIME.

The circumstances of the crime for which King was tried, found guilty, and executed, were so fully reported in the columns of the *Globe* during his trial on the 4th and 5th of April last, that it is needless to recapitulate them. It may however, be proper to allude to a few of the facts elicited at the trial. In the middle of October last, Mrs. King became seriously ill; her husband having announced to her a short time previously, and much to her surprise, that she would not live a month. On the 3rd November, she died, notwithstanding the apparent assiduous attentions of her husband, who also acted as her medical attendant. During her illness, she frequently vomited after taking the medicines he administered. The retching was violent in the extreme, and caused her great pain. Many times she begged her husband to withhold the medicines he gave her, but in the most affectionate manner he informed her that he was using the only means to save her life. A few days before she died her mother found in his pocket a likeness of a Miss Vandervoort accompanied by a note. This she did not make known till after her daughter was dead, but when once out, it brought to light several other matters so as to raise a suspicion in the minds of the relatives of Mrs. King that she had been foully murdered. This suspicion was strengthened by it being ascertained that King had purchased half an ounce of arsenic a day or two before

his wife was taken ill, and also a quantity of morphine. It was proved beyond a doubt at the trial that she had been slowly poisoned with arsenic. It was also stated at the trial that the last dose administered to the unfortunate woman was a dose of opium. This King refuted on Monday, having informed the Rev. Mr. Bleasdell, one of his spiritual advisers, that it was chloroform he used and not morphine. He made a confession privately to Mr. Bleasdell that he had administered arsenic to his wife, and gave her the dose of chloroform to produce stupor, but it was stronger than he anticipated and threw her into a state of insensibility from which she never recovered. He also attempted to palliate his dreadful crime by referring to some irregularities of his wife before marriage, and which he afterwards found out; and his infatuation for the girl Vandervoort alluded to above. These he affirmed to the last were the only reasons which prompted him to poison his wife.

#### THE CONVICT IN PRISON.

Since his condemnation, King has been visited by ministers of the Gospel of every denomination in Cobourg, all of whom he received gladly. The one, however, who was almost in constant attendance on him was the Rev. Mr. Vanderburg, of the Wesleyan Church. Rev. Dr. Burns visited him on the night of Tuesday, and the Rev. Mr. Bleasdell, Rector of Trenton, by whom King was confirmed into the Church of England; and the Ven. Archdeacon Bethune visited him on several occasions. The two gentlemen last named paid him a visit on Monday last, and after conversing with them for some time, he urgently requested their attendance with him on the scaffold. Both gentlemen were about to proceed to Toronto to attend the meeting of Synod, but promised to return and be with him on the evening previous to the execution—a promise which they fulfilled. They returned to Cobourg by the evening train on Wednesday, and immediately repaired to the gaol, where they had an interview with the miserable man, who testified much joy at their appearance. After an interval of about half-an-hour, they left, promising to be with him at an early hour on the following morning. After twelve o'clock, no one was allowed to visit him, with the exception of the Rev. Mr. Vanderburg, who was in the cell all night, along with the constable who has been with him at all hours since he was condemned. The culprit's father paid his wretched son a last visit on Tuesday, and their final parting is described as being of the most heart-rending description. None of the other members of his family have visited him within the last few days—his mother and brother being prevented from doing so by sickness. His brother-in-law, Lawson, who captured him in the United States, went into the cell on Wednesday, and had a long interview. At parting, they grasped each other's hands, and asked pardon from each other. During the night before the execution, King walked a great deal about the cell, talking on religious subjects with Mr. Vanderburg, and stated that he was fully prepared to meet his fate. At the instigation of that gentleman, he laid down for a short time on his bed and slept soundly. He arose about five o'clock, and partook of a hearty breakfast. At half-past six o'clock, Rev. Dr. Bethune and Rev. Mr. Bleasdell arrived, and after joining in religious exercises the Holy Communion was administered to the prisoner. He stated to Dr. Bethune that he felt a slight tremour—that he was nervous and afraid to a certain extent to face the crowd. Dr. Bethune encouraged him by telling him to put his trust in God, who would give him strength in the hour of his trial. He also advised him not to look at the crowd while reading his confession. Mr. Bleasdell put a portrait of his deceased wife in his hands, which had been procured from her brother. The wretched man kissed it fervently several times, and sobbed and cried, and said he hoped soon to be with her.

#### THE EXECUTION.

As the hour appointed for the execution, 8 o'clock, arrived, King became more composed; but while talking with one of the Rev. gentlemen, he heard the opening of the grated door, and exclaimed, "They are coming!" as the Sheriff and the governor of the prison (Mr. Bennett) entered the cell. Precisely at eight o'clock the Sheriff having intimated that all was ready, he left the cell followed by the Ven. Archdeacon and Mr. Bleasdell, reading the 39th Psalm. The culprit, supported on the arm of Mr. Vanderburg, came afterwards, the governor following immediately behind. King walked across the Court

House hall and ascended the ladder leading to the scaffold with a very firm step. He was very pale and his face bore the mark of recent tears. All the gentlemen who were in attendance on him, including the Sheriff and Mr. Bennett, who had known him from childhood, appeared to be much affected. On reaching the platform King immediately took up his position on the drop. It had not been considered necessary to pinion him in the prison. He gazed round on the multitude for a moment, and then read with a loud, clear tone of voice the following address:—

MY FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,—I stand before you to-day in the most awful position in which a human being can be placed—convicted of the most dreadful of all crimes, and sentenced by the laws of my country to pay the penalty of my guilt, by sacrificing my own life. It is very hard to be deprived of life in comparative youth; but I do not dispute the justice of my sentence, nor find fault with the most righteous dispensations of an all wise Providence. I have had time to think over the evil of my ways; to bewail my grievous sins and great wickedness with a deep contrition, and to go to the fountain of healing for pardon. I have besought Almighty God, night and day, for forgiveness. I look to the cross of Christ—to the merits of His precious sacrifice—as my only stay, my only hope. Unworthy as I feel myself to be of God’s compassion, I have a firm reliance upon His gracious word, that He willeth not the death of a sinner. I humbly and devoutly believe that He has pardoned me, chief of sinners though I be, for the merits of Jesus Christ, our blessed Redeemer.

I fully and entirely confide in the all-sufficiency of His atonement, and I humbly trust that through the efficacy of His precious blood, my heavenly Father will accept me, a broken-hearted penitent, into the kingdom of peace and blessedness.

I entreat my fellow-Christians to take warning from my fate, and to beware of the temptations of the evil one. I have been blinded by the evil passions of our corrupt nature, and seduced into the greatest of crimes through the instigations of the corrupt flesh and the snares of the devil. I affectionately exhort you to guard against this, and to seek steadfastly the grace of God as your only sufficient protection and safeguard.

Acknowledge Him in all your ways, live in the fear and love of God; honour his Sabbaths; keep close to Him in prayer and the reading of His word; and maintain communion with Him in the blessed ordinances of religion.

My Christian friends, I leave this world in charity with all men, and with a heartfelt prayer that God will bless the souls of all my brethren of the human race. I pray that His kingdom of peace and truth may spread everywhere, and that His will may be done on earth as purely and universally as it is in heaven.

In these my last moments, I heartily thank all those who have shewed me any kindness, especially those who have aided me during my recent trial, with their counsel and their prayers; and from my soul I forgive all those who have done me any wrong or injustice.

I beseech you, my dear Christian friends, pray now for me; join your prayers with mine that my faith may not fail at this my last hour; that no weakness of the flesh, no power of Satan, may separate me from God. Pray that I may experience His full pardon, and that, believing as I do heartily and sincerely in the Lord Jesus Christ, and deeply contrite for my sins, I shall be saved.

WM. H. KING.

Cobourg Gaol, June 9, 1859.

After this was finished, he exclaimed—“And now, my Christian friends, I bid you all farewell—a long, a last farewell.” He then turned round and warmly embraced Mr. Vanderburg, and shaking the others on the scaffold by the hands, bade them farewell. The Rev. Mr. Bleasdel having read a few sentences from the service ordered by the Church of England for the burial of the dead, the executioner came forward and requested the prisoner to kneel down. This functionary’s face was covered with a mask, so that his features could not be observed. It was said that he came from Toronto. King knelt down on the fatal drop, and the executioner pulled a white cotton cap over his face, and put the noose of the rope round his neck. He then proceeded to tie the hands and legs of the wretched man, and while

doing so, King asked the executioner to slacken the rope a little, as it was choking him, which he did. Everything being prepared, the venerable Archdeacon commenced to offer up an adaptation of the Commendatory Prayer used in the visitation of the sick for the dying, in which King was heard to join by ejaculating the word "Amen!" Before the prayer was quite ended, the Sheriff gave the preconcerted signal; the executioner drew the fatal bolt, and the unfortunate criminal was launched into eternity. The drop was between five and six feet, and as the culprit fell, an involuntary groan appeared to come from the crowd, who had been all standing with breathless attention, watching the proceedings; and one woman, who was close to the barricade, fainted, which caused a slight excitement in the vicinity of where she was standing. King appeared to expire without a struggle, although his neck was not broken, the noose having slipped round to the back of his head.

After all was over, the multitude quietly and calmly dispersed. The body after hanging about half-an-hour was cut down and placed in a coffin. The remains were handed over to some of his friends who were in waiting to be conveyed to Brighton for interment. The Rev. Mr. Vanderburg, who was so much with deceased before his execution, will accompany them.

Dr. King, until within the last few days, appeared to be under the impression that his sentence would be commuted, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be made to believe that there was no hope for him. He seemed to think that the recommendation to mercy of the jury would weigh with the executive, and it was only on last Monday that he gave up all hope of a reprieve.

This is the first execution that has taken place in the United Counties of Northumberland and Durham. About twenty years ago a man was sentenced to be hung. Archdeacon Bethune had at his earnest request agreed to attend him to the scaffold, but a reprieve arrived in Cobourg on the evening previous to the day appointed, and the execution was stayed.

“The Cant of Executions,” *Montreal Witness, Commercial Review and Family Newspaper*, July 2, 1859, p. 1

## THE CANT OF EXECUTIONS

(From *Belleville Intelligencer*.)

Among these recent executions, another attending circumstance must have been to all observers but too painfully evident. With but one exception, all the depraved felons who have been, not only the professed recipients of God’s love and mercy, but they became, like the revered martyrs in their last hour of suffering and trial, the allowed instruments of publishing God’s grace, and teaching others the ways of virtue and religion. This exaltation of the hardened criminal into a preacher of righteousness—of the gallows to a level with the sacred desk,—seems to us a shocking perversion, and a most presumptuous profanation. While this false halo of glory surrounds the culprit’s death, where are the boasted terrors, the salutary example attending his punishment?—With the gates of Heaven open to receive his ascending soul, what one of the spectators would regret to die the death of a triumphant murderer? What does it signify, though he sent his victim, without a moment’s warning, while his blood was warm within him, out of this “breathing world,” with all his sins upon his head, into endless perdition, his cold-blooded and most atrocious act but served as *the sure means* whereby he secured his own salvation. Will not this be the reasoning of the vicious mob who behold the triumphant deaths which the scaffold generally exhibits? We do not deny the *possibility* of repentance to the most condemned murderer, (although we confess our faith in such things is rather weak) but we are confident that this shameless parade, already alluded to, of sacred things where crime and its punishment should only be exhibited, has an incalculably demoralizing effect upon the community. What is still more scandalous and painful, is the thoughtless zeal of the Ministers of our holy religion in lending themselves to the perpetuation and aggravation of the evil. No doubt they have been actuated by the highest and the best of motives; but it only shows that persons may do very injurious and improper acts with the very best of intentions. It is highly proper for them to labour for the conversion even of the condemned felon, but then it is not necessary that they should either write their dying speeches or encourage them to make preachers of themselves upon the gallows.

No one could have listened to the dying speech of the murderer Rock, without being shocked at the strange admixture of penitence, exhortational cant, and sarcastic, if not profane levity, by which it was characterized. To hear the light laugh from the crowd as he gave utterance to some frivolous sallies of sarcastic wit, was enough to make the blood run cold, or to forget that it was a human being that was about to be launched into eternity. The ruling passion was exhibited strong in death—vindictiveness to those who had done him a fancied wrong, but who were out of the reach of all, save his acrimonious tongue, and a strong undying desire to make a favorable impression upon the crowd by dying “game,” and seeming sure of Heaven at the same time. These were the impressions he left upon many, and we ask in what way was his execution salutary upon the community? His case certainly is not a sole exception. How many die the same ignominious death, filled with the same vain desire—being more solicitous of the last applause of a scoffing mob, than of making peace with their Maker? We are not desirous of speaking unnecessarily harsh about even the culprit dead, and we only do so as far as may benefit the interests of the living. When their death, therefore, is to be an *example* to the community let it be for good. As now witnessed we are confident that the effects are deplorable evil, and if so it behoves the guardians of public morality to devise some improvement.