

the "Indian doctor". At the end of the day, after a brief deliberation, Richard Bird, foreman of the twelve-man jury, announced the verdict of "guilty with a strong recommendation of mercy".

The judge, Chief Justice Draper, added, "I must tell you that the law allows me no discretion in the matter. I will lay the case before the proper authorities but I deem it my duty to warn you not to spend the short time which outraged humanity yet allows you in the world in vain hopes and useless endeavours for mercy . . ." He closed the trial by pronouncing that Mary and Richard Aylward be "taken thence to the place of execution and be there hanged by the neck until you are dead."

Rev. Brennan, the curate at St. Michael's Church, an Irish immigrant himself, who had counselled the couple through their imprisonment and trial, launched an appeal. He petitioned that Mary's conviction be reduced to manslaughter and that Richard be unconditionally released. Robert Read, the local MP took the case to the floor of the House of Commons. All appeals and petitions failed. The execution would take place as scheduled.

### **DRUNKS IN THE CROWD**

At a quarter past eleven o'clock, on Monday December 10, 1862, the sad procession began its short journey from the cells in the courthouse into the frigid air. It is impossible to imagine Aylwards' reaction when they entered the yard of the Courthouse to see a massive throng of over five thousand people -- many of whom were drunk -- there to witness their death.

The Hastings Chronicle reported: "The crowd kept increasing, and every street and spot within the vicinity of the Courthouse was alive with a moving mass of humanity. There were old men with whitened locks and bent forms, and infants nursing on their mother's breasts, young men and maidens, boys and girls, of all sizes and ages. And there they stood on that bitter cold morning, surging to and fro."

With cries of "Get them out here!", "Hang them!" and the like filling the air from the rowdy crowd, the procession solemnly approached the gallows. First came the Deputy Sheriffs and Bailiffs and the hooded hangman. With a "deathly pallor on her countenance" Mary Aylward, immediately followed by her husband Richard, stepped slowly, trembling, up the steps of the scaffold. And as Mary and Richard stood upon the platform, every breath was hushed, and they saw nothing but a sea of upturned, eager, anxious-looking faces. Mary was dressed all in white with a crepe shawl covering her shoulders. She also wore around her neck the noose -- ready to be fastened to hooks on the gallows.

### **FELL TO THEIR KNEES**

No sooner had they arrived on the platform, husband and wife fell upon their knees in prayer with Rev. Mr. Brennan. Following their devotions the priest assisted the Aylwards to their feet while the executioner hooked the ropes to the wooden cross-piece which would suspend them in death and covered their heads with the newly-made black hoods. This was done in an experienced, but nervous fashion, by the hangman, a short thickset man, dressed head-to-toe in a face-covering white gown.

Rev. Mr. Brennan asked Richard if he had any final words. The young man was too distraught in emotion, too broken in spirit to speak, so the priest stepped forward and addressed the crowd on his and Mary's behalf. Rev. Mr. Brennan "begged them in their charity" to pray to God that "through the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, he would have mercy on (the Aylwards') souls". It is doubtful the crowd heard; it is even more doubtful the crowd cared. They were there to see the Aylwards hang, to see them die. They got their wish.

The priest stepped back as the Aylwards stood with their hands folded in prayer to their God. The hangman pulled the bolt that removed the wooden floor from beneath their feet and "the spirits of the unfortunate creatures stood in the presence of their Maker." Rev. Mr. Brennan collapsed at the same