

GUILTY!

JUDGEMENT

On April 6, 1859, the jury foreman pronounced Dr. King guilty of murder, recommending mercy. The doctor did not appear to have expected the verdict, and three days later, when he was sentenced to hang, his *“lip quivered, and burying his face in his handkerchief he wept convulsively”*.

After repeatedly denying responsibility, **Dr. King did eventually confess**, to the Reverend Levi Vanderberg, a local Wesleyan Minister. But even in his confession, he blamed his crime on lust, his early marriage, the temptations of ambition and wealth, and the insanity of a loveless union.

Execution day was June 9, 1859. The day before, the local paper, the *Cobourg Star*, exhorted the public to abstain from attending the *“hideous spectacle”* to come. It was a futile hope as *“between six and seven thousand persons... [were] in the vicinity of the gallows”*. There was however, *“no confusion or disorder”*.

From the scaffold, King had words for those attending. He was, he said, *“unworthy of God’s compassion”*, but declared, *“I humbly and devoutly believe that he has pardoned me”*. He also entreated his *“fellow Christians to take warning from my fate, and to beware the temptations of the evil one”*.

In an interesting conclusion to the event, some members of the victim’s family managed to gain possession of **the fateful rope, cutting it up into small pieces and selling them as souvenirs!**

Dr. King was denied burial on consecrated ground, and on Saturday, June 11, 1859, **his body was buried near the southeast corner of the King family’s home**, near Codrington, in the township of Brighton, with the Rev. Levi Vanderburg reading the burial service, and some 1,500 people in attendance!

To this day, no other execution has been performed in Northumberland County.

Dan Buchanan’s definitive telling of this story is titled:
MURDER IN THE FAMILY: THE DR. KING STORY
published by Dundurn Press, Toronto, 2015



PORTRAIT OF MRS. KING.

CONFESSION.

WRITTEN FOR THE TORONTO “GLOBE.”

I beg to claim your indulgence for space in the columns of your valuable journal, as a medium or channel through which I can communicate to the external world the influences brought to bear on me, and motives by which I was actuated in the committal of a crime, the penalty for which I am shortly to endure.

The Press have me down as being a cold black-hearted murderer without cause or provocation. Well, I will lay open the facts and allow the world to sit in judgment and then pass its sentence. To begin then, I must confess that I have done wrong, and for what I am guilty no man could feel more sorrow, or repent more deeply both before God and man than I do.

My present unfortunate position is the result of an unhappy marriage. In my former life I had made it a rule never to speak disparagingly of, or say ought against the dead, but justice to myself, and an imperative duty to God compel me to unmask the whole tragedy, to lay open to and before the world in as clear, lucid, and concise a manner as possible, the chain of events and circumstances which have led to such an unhappy result, however painful the task may be.

Indeed, I approach the subject with the same degree of solemnity that I should feel were I standing on the scaffold—I feel that I have now no end to attain, by making misstatements, while on the other hand, I would only deceive myself were I to do so, and therefore seal my everlasting doom.

