

Chapter 1

Introduction

When I wrote a book on the famous Manitoba case of serial killer Earle Nelson, who was hanged in January 1928, I included a considerable amount of information on the hangman, “Arthur Ellis” whose real name was Alexander Armstrong English.¹ I discovered a great deal about him from various British newspapers and from genealogical sources; information that had never been published before. Did you know, for example, that English, after training to be a hangman at Pentonville Prison in late 1905, abandoned his wife and children and disappeared in 1906, eventually showing up in Canada? While Ellis/English grossly inflated his body count, he hanged at least 210 people as Canada’s primary hangman from 1910 through the first half of the 1930’s. I discovered that most of what had been written about his past was a myth.

Judicial killings were still killings, and as I stated in the book on Earle Nelson, one serial killer hanged another serial killer.² But more importantly for the purposes of this current book on the hangmen of Canada, I believe we had one psychopathic serial killer hanging another psychopathic serial killer.

¹ Alvin A. J. Esau, *The Gorilla Man Strangler Case: Serial Killer Earle Nelson* (Altona: Friesen Press, 2022). Material on Ellis at 402-410; 429-430. Subsequently I wrote about the probable murders that Nelson committed in the United States before coming to Canada. See Alvin A. J. Esau, *31 Murders: Following the Trail of Serial Sex Killer Earle Nelson* (Jefferson North Carolina: Exposit, McFarland, 2024). For additional possible murders see alvinesau.com

² *Ibid.* at 406.

Since I had already worked on hangman Arthur Ellis's biography, I decided to study the other main hangmen in post-confederation Canada, as well as finding more information on Arthur Ellis. Utilizing newspaper databases, genealogical records, and archival sources, this book deals with the hanging careers, journalistic descriptions and self-references, financial arrangements, and biographical material on the actual identity, if possible, of John Radclive (Daniel James Ratley), Arthur Ellis (Alexander Armstrong English), J. Holmes, Sam Edwards (Samuel Smith), John Ellis (John Bernard Moore), Camille Branchaud, and John Ellis No. 2. There are some remarkable similarities that emerged from this study in terms of the characteristics of these seven hangmen. Did you know, for example, that Radclive, like Arthur Ellis, also abandoned his wife and child in England when he came to Canada with a different "wife"?

Even though we are aware of the danger of easily labelling people as psychopaths and the danger of diagnosing people without having any training in psychology or psychiatry, one of the possibilities raised in this book is that some, if not most, of these seven hangmen, displayed behavior that put them high on some scale of having psychopathic personalities. Many psychopaths are not serial killers. Some of them are found within the circle of "successful" corporate executives, lawyers, politicians, and other high-functioning professions.³ They can appear charming and affable to others, but are very self-centred, lacking emotional attachments to other people or empathy for the suffering of others. They are egocentric and grandiose liars, manipulative con artists. They fail to take responsibility for their actions and often have multiple sexual and marital relationships. The most influential modern theorist, at least in the forensic field, is University of British Columbia psychologist, Dr. Robert Hare, who developed the psychopathy checklist, which when properly administered, provides a sliding score from zero to forty that tests psychopathic

³ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of Psychopaths Among Us* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993). See also, Paul Babiak and Robert Hare, *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths go to Work* (New York: HarperCollins 2006).

traits and behaviours. The twenty main traits and behaviors that are tested in the Hare checklist are:

1. Glibness/Superficial Charm
2. Grandiose Sense of Self-Worth
3. Need for Stimulation/Proneness to Boredom
4. Pathological Lying
5. Conning/Manipulation
6. Lack of Remorse or Guilt
7. Shallow Affect
8. Callous/Lack of Empathy
9. Parasitic Lifestyle
10. Poor Behavioural Controls
11. Promiscuous Sexual Behaviour
12. Early Behavioural Problems
13. Lack of Realistic, Long-Term Goals
14. Impulsivity
15. Irresponsibility
16. Failure to Accept Responsibility for Own Actions
17. Many Short-Term Marital Relationships
18. Juvenile Delinquency
19. Revocation of Conditional Release (failure to learn from experience when granted parole, for example)
20. Criminal Versatility

It takes a certain type of person to send others to their death for a living, but rather than necessarily being psychopaths, their own discourse often claimed that they were humanitarians, doing a job for society involving a skill that they were proud of, and causing the least pain as possible to those they executed. However, sometimes they ended up as victims of their own occupation, becoming alcoholics and suffering extreme psychological trauma, both from the killing they committed and the social ostracism from the public, most of whom agreed with capital punishment yet considered the hangman to be a vile creature. For example, when Radclive attempted to cut the ponytail off his Chinese victim in Vancouver to sell as a souvenir, the *Toronto Star* in 1900 stated, "If he were a man of delicate sensibilities, he would not be the hangman. He is a necessity in our system, but he should be treated

as if he is the hole in the floor of the gallows.”⁴ This social stigma placed on the hangman was arguably illogical. The judges who pronounced the sentence of death were honored members of high society, with memberships in the best clubs and circles of influence. The sheriffs, like Colin Inkster in Winnipeg, had to attend each execution, in full ceremonial dress, and were officially in charge of each execution, giving the signal to the hangman to proceed, and yet there seemed to be no social stigma attached to them. We have streets, schools, houses and electoral districts bearing the name of Sheriff Inkster, who was also the Rector’s Warden at St. Johns’ Cathedral for more than half a century.⁵ We will note the social disapproval of all the hangmen in this book, but in addition I would argue that much of this disapproval was exasperated by their own misbehaviors, scandals, and obnoxious personalities.

This book focuses on the public career and private life (so far as can be known) of the Canadian hangmen, rather than on the history of capital punishment,⁶ or the ritualized nature of the process from conviction, appeals for commutation, last meals, spiritual advisors, processions to the gallows, last words, and so forth. There are several fine books on these subjects.⁷ Also this book focuses on the hangman and not on the people who were hanged or their crimes.⁸

⁴ As quoted in Patrick Cain, “The Agony of the Executioner,” *Toronto Star*, May 20, 2007, at D4.

⁵ “Colin Inkster,” *Memorable Manitobans*, Manitoba Historical Society website.

⁶ See, David Chandler, *Capital Punishment in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); C. H. S. Jaywardene, *The Penalty of Death: The Canadian Experiment* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977).

⁷ Dale Brawn, *Last Moments: Sentenced to Death in Canada* (Canada: Quagmire Press, 2011); Lorna Poplak, *Drop Dead: The Horrible History of Hanging in Canada* (Toronto: Dundrum, 2017); Ken Leyton-Brown, *The Practice of Execution in Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2010).

⁸ For those hanged and their crimes see, Jeffrey Pfeifer and Ken Leyton-Brown, *Death by Rope, Vol. One: 1867-1923* (Regina: Vanity Press, 2007).

I. BASIC INFORMATION ON CANADIAN HANGING

By way of introduction, we will now provide some very basic background information as to hanging in Canada. While American jurisdictions experimented with the electric chair, the gas chamber, and lethal injection,⁹ Canada remained committed to execution by rope. Not counting all the executions in colonial times, after Confederation in 1867 Canadian authorities executed more than 700 people, when the mandatory sentence for murder was hanging.¹⁰ While the last Canadian hanging was in 1962, capital punishment was not formally abolished in Canada until 1976, and a vote in the House of Commons to return to capital punishment was defeated in 1987.

Part of the royal prerogative of the Crown is to grant pardons or commute or remit criminal sentences. This power in Canada, at least in terms of capital cases, was historically exercised by the Governor General on behalf of the monarch, but only upon the advice of the Privy Council, namely the federal cabinet in Ottawa. Every person sentenced to death would have their case considered by cabinet, whether they applied for such consideration or not. An order in council would be issued in each case as to whether the sentence of death would proceed, or whether there would be a commutation to life in prison or some other disposition. As we will note in the book, Canadian hangmen often travelled to perform executions and then had those cancelled at the last moment when the cabinet decision was made to commute the death sentence. As we will see from archival evidence, hangmen often had disputes as to how much they should be paid when hangings were cancelled.

⁹ Frederick Drimmer, *Until You Are Dead* (New York: Pinnacle Books, 1990); As to electrocution see Richard Moran, *Executioner's Current* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).

¹⁰ Robert Hoshowsky, *The Last to Die: Ronald Turpin, Arthur Lucas and the End of Capital Punishment in Canada* (Toronto: Dundrum, 2007) says 710; while Lorna Poplak, *Drop Dead: The Horrible History of Hanging in Canada* (Toronto: Dundrum, 2017) says 704 at 16; Jeffrey Pfeifer and Ken Leyton-Brown, *Death by Rope, Vol. One: 1867-1923* (Regina: Vanity Press, 2007) say 702.

There is a myth that a majority of death sentences were commuted. For example, Jeffrey Pfeiffer and Ken Leyton-Brown state that in post-Confederation Canada 1532 people were sentenced to death and 702 were hanged and thus, “a majority were eventually commuted.”¹¹ Carolyn Strange does fine work on the differential commutation rates for women compared to men and also looks at the race factor in commutation decisions. But again, the reader is left with the impression that a majority of sentences were commuted by the royal prerogative.¹²

I believe these claims are slightly misleading because many cases were not dealt with by the cabinet at all. Rather the person condemned to death died in prison naturally, or by suicide before the cabinet ever met, and a whole lot more of them appealed their sentence to a higher court and were given new trials where they were acquitted, or they were convicted of manslaughter. When we eliminate these cases, we discover that the majority of the death sentence cases actually considered by cabinet were *not* commuted, and this is so even though the numbers of commutations went up considerably when capital punishment was increasingly disfavoured in the last few decades before it was abolished. Closer to the truth is Kimberley White who stated that regarding cases from 1920 to 1950, fifty-five per cent of death sentences were upheld by the cabinet.¹³ Two archivists who have exhaustively indexed the capital case files have identified 1533 cases where the death sentence was imposed. By my rough count in terms of actual cabinet decisions there were 705 executions and 630 commutations.¹⁴ This means that there were 198 cases that were

¹¹ Jeffrey Pfeiffer and Ken Leyton-Brown, *Death by Rope*, (Regina: Vanity Press, 2007) at 1.

¹² Carolyn Strange, “The Lottery of Death: Capital Punishment 1867 – 1976,” Guth and Pue, eds., *Canada’s Legal Inheritances* (Winnipeg: Faculty of Law, 2001) 594-619 at 607. See also Carolyn Strange, “Discretionary Justice: Political Culture and Death Penalty in New South Wales and Ontario 1890-1920,” Strange ed., *Qualities of Mercy* at 130-165; Carolyn Strange, *The Death Penalty and Sex Murder in Canadian History* (Toronto: U. of T. Press, 2020).

¹³ Kimberley White, *Negotiating Responsibility: Law, Murder and States of Mind* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

¹⁴ Based on the work of archivists Lorraine Gadoury and Antonia Lechasseur,

never dealt with by cabinet, the majority of these being cases leading to acquittal or a reduced sentence for manslaughter instead of murder after a new trial.

Substantive criminal law and procedure is a federal responsibility, but the administration of that law is a provincial responsibility. If a sentence was not commuted, the Sheriff of each judicial district, appointed by the provincial authorities, was responsible for carrying out the death sentences within their region, but because of the gruesome nature of the task, and the likelihood that the task might be bungled by an amateur, a practice developed in Canada as it had in England of most sheriffs hiring a hangman who carried out the verdict of the law when commutations were denied. This book deals with the seven most frequently hired hangmen over the many decades of hanging in post-confederation Canada.

While we will note in due course the “jerk up” gallows used by Radclive in the earlier part of his career, hanging generally involved building a scaffold with two levels, an upper level with a platform and trap door and upper bar or beam from which the rope was attached, and a second lower level where the body of the victim would end up. This second level was eventually curtained off from view, but for the medical examiner in charge of pronouncing death and the hangman who would cut the rope releasing the corpse. Even in a “good” drop it was likely that the victim would have defecated and urinated as a result of the process.¹⁵ If the drop was bad, the scene at the lower level of the scaffold would be particularly unpleasant, with blood pouring from the victim, or the victim would be struggling and convulsing for various periods of time while being strangled to death.¹⁶

“Persons Sentenced to Death in Canada, 1867-1976: An Inventory of Case Files in the Fonds of the Department of Justice,” 1994, National Archives of Canada.

¹⁵ Dale Brawn, *Last Moments: Sentenced to Death in Canada* (Canada: Quagmire Press, 2011) at 21.

¹⁶ Brawn provides details on numerous botched executions in Canadian history at 239-272. So does Poplak at 81-86; 91-98.

Until permanent gallows were installed inside some jails, the hangman would often be responsible for supervising the construction of the gallows and testing the gallows. In any case the hangman was responsible for testing and stretching the rope so that the victim would not bounce at the end of the drop. The hangman would pinion the arms of the victim in the prison and then there would be a march to the gallows, where the prisoner and the officials would climb up the stairs of the scaffold to the second level. The hangman would then place the prisoner on the trap doors and pinion the legs with leather straps and usually place a hood over the head of the victim and draw the noose tightly around the neck with the knot behind the left ear. While the victim stood on the trap door, the hangman would kick a bolt or release a lever, and the trap would swing open, and the victim would drop to their death.¹⁷

William Marwood, a British executioner, while borrowing ideas from the Irish, is generally credited with developing the science of hanging by placing the knot of the rope under the left ear and determining the weight of the person in relation to the proper length of the drop so that the victim's neck would be broken, or at least the vertebrae in the neck would be dislocated, and thus supposedly the subject would lose consciousness in an instant rather than enduring prolonged suffering by being strangled to death by too short of a drop, as had been the situation previously.¹⁸ However, hanging was not just based on a simple table of weights and lengths of drops, but also on an analysis of each victim in terms of the muscularity of the neck and their state of health generally. If the drop was too long, the victim might be decapitated, a rather messy affair, and if the drop was too short, the person might have been conscious for a time and dying in great pain. Generally, the lighter the victim, the longer the drop.

¹⁷ Ken Leyton-Brown, *The Practice of Execution in Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2010).

¹⁸ As for hangmen in England see Brian Bailey, *Hangmen of England: The History of Execution from Jack Ketch to Albert Pierrepoint* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1989); Howard Engel, *Lord High Executioner* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1996); Steve Fielding, *The Executioner's Bible* (King's Road Publishing, 2008).

Bungled hangings were not just the result of too short or too long of a drop. Other disasters might be caused by improper placement of the rope, or malfunction of the trap door. Despite the theory of the long drop, botched executions continued throughout the whole history of hanging in Canada. As noted by Ken Leyton-Brown, “the record of hanging in Canada is a litany of disasters and human suffering...”¹⁹

II. HANGMEN AND HANGING: CONFEDERATION TO START OF BOOK IN 1890

Finally, by way of introduction we note that our study begins with Radclive in 1890. We are not dealing with colonial hangings or hangmen, or even with hangmen from 1867 to 1890, a period of over two decades after Confederation. We do note that some hangmen in the first couple of decades after Confederation were identified in the press.²⁰ We have not attempted to research them with any depth. Rather there does seem to be some apparent characteristics that foreshadow the biographies of the hangmen covered in this book.

There was a hangman in Ontario who seems to have been relatively competent. This experienced hangman, with blackened face, executed Nicholas Melady in Goderich, Ontario, on December 7, 1869, and was named Jesse Marshall from Toronto.²¹ Marshall ended up in Hamilton, living on Pearl Street, and the press noted at a local hanging in 1876 that he had executed 7 more criminals since hanging Melady.²² While he was disguised in the “garb of a prisoner, head completely covered by a mask of black

¹⁹ Ken Leyton-Brown, *The Practice of Execution in Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2010) at 150.

²⁰ For an overview of hangings in this period and the identification of some of the hangmen, see Jeffrey Pfeifer and Ken Layton-Brown, *Death by Rope: 1867-1923* (Regina: Varsity Press, 2007).

²¹ John Melady, *Double Trap: The Last Public Hanging in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2005).

²² “The Man Who Hanged McConnell,” *Kingston News*, March 17, 1876, at 2.

grape”²³ while hanging McConnell in Hamilton on March 14, 1876, he then went around town boasting of his exploits as hangman. A Kingston newspaper revealed that he was an old soldier who claimed that in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 he “assisting in roping no less than eight Sepoys at one time and counts the number of those whose executions he has helped in by the hundreds.” He eventually became a corrupt “whiskey-detective” and served a year in jail for perjury. According to this hostile press report, he had “a blissful ignorance of truth.” After hanging McConnell, he apparently was brought up to police court for a drunken assault on his mother-in-law.²⁴

There are indeed newspaper reports confirming that someone called Jesse Marshall was a “whiskey informer” in Hamilton, investigating and prosecuting those who sold liquor without a license. In 1872 a crowd of men who hated the informer, induced a lad of 16 to assault Jesse Marshall.²⁵ In 1875 Marshall charged and prosecuted his own wife for being drunk and disorderly, and laid a charge against the man who had allegedly sold her the whisky.²⁶

Marshall, if that was his name, continued to hang people in Ontario, now using the name of English, or England. This is ironic given that the real name of hangman “Arthur Ellis” many decades later was Alexander English. There was at least one press report in 1877 in Kingston mentioning a Henry England as the whisky detective entrapping unlicensed sellers by hiring youths to purchase the alcohol.²⁷ In November 1877 at a hanging in Toronto, the press called him Henry England, whisky detective and hangman, who was threatened by the crowd when he left the jail and had to run back into the jail where he was let out the back way,

²³ “The Scene of the Execution,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 14, 1876, at 3.

²⁴ *Supra*, note 22.

²⁵ “Police Court,” *Hamilton Spectator*, Jan. 22, 1872, at 3.

²⁶ “Police Court,” *Hamilton Spectator*, March 6, 1875, at 3; and March 10, 1875, at 3.

²⁷ “Liquor Case,” *Kingston News*, Feb. 26, 1877.

but was eventually “set upon by two men and badly pounded.”²⁸ Two years later in 1879 at a hanging in Cornwall the press said his name was “English,”²⁹ and he openly boasted of how well he had done “to the disgust of those of who heard him.”³⁰ He had to be rescued from the crowd on the train on his return to Toronto due to his obnoxious “bravado and exultations.”³¹ In 1880 at a hanging in Toronto he was called “England” again.³² In 1880 this Henry England, executioner, applied to Toronto city hall for free passes to Montreal for himself, wife and several children.³³ He lived on Elizabeth Street in Toronto and his house was constantly surrounded by “bad boys” taunting him and he was unemployable.³⁴

In 1878, a hangman in Quebec by the name of Henry Rees, had been recently released from jail in Montreal so as to act as hangman.³⁵ After the hanging, he got arrested as a drunk and for causing a disturbance and assaulting a policeman.³⁶ Allegedly he also conspired with a medical professor to steal the body of the hanged man.³⁷

After a hanging in Sandwich, (Windsor) in 1884, the alleged hangman by the name of John Greenwood was arrested in Buffalo as he ran down the streets wildly proclaiming that he had seen the friends of the man he had killed, and they were out to kill him. He had been drinking heavily and suffered from delirium tremens and was in a “demented state.”³⁸ Subsequently, John Greenwood was

²⁸ “After the Hangman,” *Hamilton Spectator*, Dec. 1, 1877, at 1.

²⁹ “The Hangman and the Crowd,” *Montreal Star*, Nov. 3, 1879, at 2.

³⁰ “On the Gallows,” *Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 18, 1878, at 1.

³¹ *Supra* note 29.

³² “Dixon’s Death,” *Kingston British Whig*, July 23, 1880, at 2.

³³ “Note,” *Kingston Whig*, July 26, 1880, at 2.

³⁴ “The Toronto Hangman,” *Man. Free Press*, Aug. 2, 1880, at 1.

³⁵ “The Gallows,” *Montreal Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1878, at 2.

³⁶ “That Hangman,” *Montreal Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1878, at 4.

³⁷ “The Murderer’s Grave,” *Montreal Gazette*, Jan. 4, 1879, at 4.

³⁸ “A Hangman Goes Insane,” *Biddeford (Maine) Journal*, June 23, 1884, at 1.

again put in prison in Erie for 20 days on a charge of vagrancy. Foreshadowing the themes we will encounter in this book, Greenwood allegedly “boasted that he was the world’s champion hangman... He is very proud of his calling and plumes himself on having executed more murderers than any other man on earth. At Sandwich last June, while Phipps was hanging on the scaffold, Greenwood cried out exultantly: ‘Didn’t I do that well!’³⁹ Another paper described him as a stout Englishman, 38 years old and 5 feet, 6 inches tall.⁴⁰ Another stated he was 34 years old from Lancashire and that his stories as to hanging people in England and the United States were likely flights of his own imagination.⁴¹ Greenwood, after getting out of the workhouse, was arrested again for drunkenness.⁴²

Jack Henderson, who was allegedly imprisoned during Riel’s provisional government, subsequently hanged Riel in 1885, and then was persuaded, against his better judgement,⁴³ to act in a double execution in Regina in 1888, which he bungled.⁴⁴ Robert Hodson, hanged a man in Winnipeg in 1874, and then in 1885 he was imprisoned by Cree warriors at Fort Pitt during the Riel Rebellion. Out of revenge, Hodson, described as a small man,⁴⁵ hanged the eight native warriors in Battleford. It was later reported that having been appointed the executioner for Canada, he sold his business in Regina to go West to a hanging in British Columbia only to have the Sherriff bring him back to town to pay his debts.⁴⁶ Archival evidence shows that he did indeed apply to be the Dominion hangman, writing from 731 Main Street, Winnipeg, on

³⁹ “A Vagrant Hangman.” *Hamilton Spectator*, Nov. 20, 1884, at 4.

⁴⁰ “A Noted Hangman,” *Buffalo News*, Nov. 10, 1884, at 9.

⁴¹ “A Hangman’s Story,” *Buffalo Courier Express*, Nov. 13, 1884, at 8.

⁴² “Arrested Again,” *Buffalo Courier Express*, Nove 26, 1884, at 10.

⁴³ He initially refused. See, “Regina.” *Man. Free Press*, June 11, 1888, at 1.

⁴⁴ “Hanged,” *Regina Leader-Post*, June 19, 1888, at 2. Henderson died in 1902. See “A Strange Life Ended,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 9, 1902, at 8.

⁴⁵ “Re Riel,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, Aug. 21, 1937, at 12.

⁴⁶ “Hodson from Saskatchewan Herald,” *Manitoba Free Press*, Jan. 28, 1886, at 11.

June 30, 1886, but the response was that no such position existed.⁴⁷ It may be that Hodson continued to be hired for various hangings in Western Canada, but we do not know whether he was the unidentified “short” executioner, apparently competent, mentioned in numerous press reports at various hangings from 1885 through 1889.⁴⁸

Again, foreshadowing our narrative involving various scandals, Charles Lawson, who allegedly was twice a hangman in Montreal, was jailed as a vagrant in 1886.⁴⁹ Similarly, a William Thompson, allegedly the executioner of Neil in 1888, was subsequently charged with theft.⁵⁰

While all the hangmen we will deal with in this book had their share of bungled executions, bungling in the first decades after Confederation was particularly frequent. For example, a novice hangman with a too short rope reportedly jumped on the shoulders of the choking victim until he was dead.⁵¹ In another case the drop was too long and the victim was nearly decapitated and bleeding profusely.⁵² In another case the bleeding victim was prevented from a complete decapitation by the hangman propping up his feet after the drop.⁵³ A drunk hangman gave too much rope to the victim who fell to the ground and then was hanged a second time.⁵⁴ Similarly, the rope broke in another case and the victim purportedly fell fifteen feet and was brought back to the gallows an hour later when the hook holding the rope broke free and the man fell to the ground again, and the man was eventually pulled up by

⁴⁷ Archives of Canada, RG13-A-2, Volume #64, File # 1886-165.

⁴⁸ For example, Malotte and Sproule in 1886, Ah Chow in 1887, Ah Fat and Webb in 1888, Jones in 1889.

⁴⁹ “Court News,” *Montreal Gazette*, June 26, 1886, at 3.

⁵⁰ “A Peculiar Case,” *Montreal Gazette*, March 26, 1888, at 1.

⁵¹ “A Bungling Calcraft,” *Victoria Colonist*, Aug. 17, 1869, at 6.

⁵² “A Ghastly Spectacle,” *Montreal Star*, Jan. 13, 1882, at 2.

⁵³ “Execution,” *Regina Leader-Post*, June 19, 1888, at 2; “Paid the Penalty,” *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review*, June 29, 1888, at 3.

⁵⁴ “Note re Poitras,” *Kingston News*, Sept. 22, 1869, at 2.

several men and strangled to death.⁵⁵ In another case the trap did not open and the hangman had to sledge hammer it open.⁵⁶ In another case the incompetent hangman allowed the rope to loop around the victim's arms while the still conscious and screaming victim, freeing his hands from the pinions, grasped hold of the rope while strangling to death.⁵⁷ In the high profile hanging of Whelan convicted of the assassination of D'Arcy McGee, some reports implied that the contortions and twitching of the body occurred for some of the time that Whelan was still conscious and suffering in agony.⁵⁸ In at least eight cases, an insufficient drop or an improperly placed noose resulted in a strangling rather than a dislocated neck, and in some of these cases the victims may have been conscious for a time and in obvious agony.⁵⁹ We will deal with various additional bungles involving the "jerk up," instead of "drop down" method of hanging, in the next chapter on Radcliffe.

The social disapproval of executioners was also evident in the early decades after Confederation. When Ethan Allen was hanged at Kingston on December 11, 1867, the masked hangman was a "colored person" from Toronto said to be the special reporter of

⁵⁵ "A Telegram," *St. John Freeman*, April 13, 1869, at 2; "Execution of Dowey," *Summerside Journal*, April 15, 1869, at 1.

⁵⁶ "The Scaffold," *Ottawa Citizen*, Sept. 22, 1876, at 1; *Kingston Whig*, Sept. 23, 1876, at 2.

⁵⁷ "The Last of Farrell," *Kingston Whig*, Jan. 10, 1879, at 2; *Kingston News*, Jan. 10, 1879, at 2; "Hanging Under Difficulties," *New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, Feb. 8, 1879, at 3.

⁵⁸ "Execution of Whelan," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, Feb. 15, 1869, at 2; *Montreal Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1869, at 1.

⁵⁹ "Execution of Mann and Deacon," *Kingston News*, Dec. 14, 1870, at 1; "Two Executions," *Kingston Whig*, Dec. 29, 1873, at 4; "The Gallows re McIver," *Manitoba Free Press*, Jan. 7, 1876, at 8; "Vankoughnet," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, June 28, 1882, at 2; "Convict Killed by Degrees," *Manitoba Free Press*, July 3, 1882, at 7; "A Bungled Hanging," *Kingston Whig*, June 10, 1884, at 2; "The Gallows: Re Williams," *Prince Albert Times*, April 11, 1884, at 1. See also "Bungled Execution of 1884," *Kingston Whig*, May 1, 1973, at 5. "Execution of Rogers," *Victoria Times*, Jan. 28, 1885, at 3; "Paid the Penalty," *Victoria Colonist*, Jan. 29, 1885, at 6; "Execution of Ah Suey," *Victoria Standard*, Nov. 5, 1886, at 3.

an enterprising evening journal and an old hand at the business.⁶⁰ The crowd on the train returning to Toronto recognized the hangman and hooted and harassed him on his return trip.⁶¹

During a time when executions were public events, an amateur hangman in Quebec was badly beaten by the mob after he bungled the job.⁶² Two hangmen were apparently beaten up by the folks on a train after returning from a hanging in Quebec.⁶³ When the identity of a hangman who had botched a job in Kingston became known he was subjected to various social persecutions including dismissal from his job.⁶⁴ A novice hangman who bungled a double hanging in Picton, Ontario, apparently lived in Trenton, Ontario, and the hangman's fellow workers refused to work with him, and various masked men with clubs were seen skulking around his house.⁶⁵ The hangman who came to London, Ontario, in 1886 was kicked out of a hotel when his identity was discovered, and he had to be lodged in the jail.⁶⁶ After a hanging in Nanaimo in 1887, the brother of the man hanged actually killed a man whom he thought was the hangman. But it was a case of mistaken identity.⁶⁷ The following year, the hangman in Pembroke, Ontario, was attacked by men who wanted to "ride him on the rail." He escaped and was purportedly planning to leave the country.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ "Special Telegrams," *Kingston Whig-Standard*, Dec. 13, 1867, at 2.

⁶¹ "Execution of Ethan Allen," *Weekly British Whig*, Dec. 12, 1867, at 3.

⁶² "Sayings and Doings," *Halifax Sun*, May 22, 1867, at 2.

⁶³ Re Bissonnette, in Pfeifer and Leyton-Brown, at 20-21.

⁶⁴ "Note," *Amherstburg Echo*, July 7, 1882, at 3.

⁶⁵ "General News," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 26, 1884, at 2; *Winnipeg Sun*, June 17, 1884, at 1; "Eastern Canada Mail," *Victoria Colonist*, June 29, 1884, at 4.

⁶⁶ "Re Simmonds," *Manitoba Free Press*, Nov. 28, 1885, at 4; *Hamilton Spectator*, Dec. 3, 1885, at 4; *Manitoba Free Press*, Dec. 3, 1885, at 2.

⁶⁷ "The Nanaimo Hanging," *Victoria Times*, Aug. 26, 1887, at 1; *Victoria Colonist*, Aug. 27, 1887, at 4.

⁶⁸ "Late Canadian News," *Victoria Colonist*, June 28, 1887, at 3.