

MARY AYLWARD

A Play in Two Parts

by

Paul Kirby



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writer@paulkirby.ca

www.paulkirby.ca

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CAST

Mary Aylward (adult)
Richard Aylward
John Aylward (child)
Mary Aylward (child)
English boy (child)

(Actors play a variety of roles and also sing as the CHORUS)

1. Mary's Father; Neighbour; Mr. Finn
2. Mr. Munro; Rev. Brennan, A.A. Yeomans
3. Mary's Mother; Isabella McCrae; Handmaid
4. Mary's Grandfather; Rev. Lawlor; Judge Draper
5. Sailor; Alex Munro; Clerk; Hangman
6. English Landlord; Mr. Wilson; Chronicle Reporter; Sheriff Moodie
7. William Johnson; Fr. Riordan; J.P. McDonnell,
8. Mr. Selby; Mr. Eadus; Robert Elliot; Hon. Robert Read.

SET

The set is a two-level structure. This could easily be accomplished by using construction scaffolding. The bottom level will represent throughout the play a prison cell, Irish bog house, a Canadian cabin, and the lower level of a ship. The upper level is the upper level of a ship, a speaker's platform, a judge's bench, Governor-General's clerk's office, and the gallows.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES OF TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC THE HOUSE LIGHTS DIM

PART ONE

PROLOGUE – BELLEVILLE, CANADA WEST, 1862

AT RISE, THE SET IS THE PLAY IS UNCOVERED BY A LIGHT. THE HOUSE MUSIC CHANGES INTO A SLOWER, PEACEFUL MOOD. AS THE LIGHTS DIM WE HEAR THE VOICE OVER OF MARY AYLWARD

MARY:

Dear Lord. In two hours I will be in your arms. You know how terrified I have been. But I know that death is not the end . . . and I have peace.

THE MUSIC LEADS INTO THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD AS THE LIGHTS RISE ON THE

CHORUS

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART ONE)

CHORUS:

My name was Mary O'Brien
at Limerick I was born.
In eighteen forty six, my land
Was occupied and torn.
Like millions, I left my home
Escaping pain and strife.
My life took me to Canada
But Canada took my life.
My life took me to Canada
But Canada took my life.

My name is Mary Aylward
at Belleville, I will die.
I stand accused of murder
I swear it's all a lie.
Protecting home and family
Is all I'm guilty of.
I give my soul to my maker.
To God in Heaven above.
I'm in the arms of my maker
My God in Heaven above.

MARY:

(VOICE OVER) My dear sweet babies, I am leaving you these letters to tell you the truth about what happened to me and your Pa. I was born in a little village called Toor near Ardpatrick in County Limerick, Ireland in 1839. I had a very happy life with my Ma and Pa and my brothers and sisters. We didn't have much but we had each other.

SCENE 1 - TOOR, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND, 1846

A YOUNG GIRL, MARY AYLWARD, AGE 7, INITIALLY UNSEEN, AND HER BROTHER JOHN AGE 12, ARE PLAYING A HIDE-AND-SEEK TYPE GAME AROUND THEIR BOG HOME. THEY ARE SPEAKING GAELIC BUT WE DO NOT KNOW THIS YET. MARY IS TRYING NOT TO BE FOUND, BUT POKES HER HEAD OUT ANYWAY

BROTHER:

A cuig, a ceathair, a tri, a do, a haon. Ready or not, here I come. You know you can't hide from me, Mary. You may be little but I will find you. You'll start giggling. You always giggle, you silly little thing. I think you are over ... here! No? Hmmm. That is where you usually hide. You are getting tricky. How about behind... here! Ah, now, what was that rustling sound?

MARY THINKS SHE HAS BEEN FOUND SO SHE SLOWLY BACKS OUT OF THE BUSHES LOOKING AHEAD OF HER WHERE HER BROTHER WOULD BE. SUDDENLY SHE SCREAMS. MARY STANDS UPRIGHT AND RUNS ACROSS THE STAGE LOOKING BACK. BROTHER HOLDS MARY TIGHT TO HIM. BOTH LOOK OFF .

BROTHER:

Who are you? Who are you? What are you doing here?

BOY, 13, ENTERS. BOY SPEAKS WITH AN ENGLISH ACCENT

BOY:

What are you saying? I do not understand you.

MARY:

What did he say?

BROTHER:
What do you want?

BOY:
Speak so that I can understand you.

MARY:
I can not understand him. Is he speaking English?

BROTHER:
Yes.

BOY:
English. Yes. I am English. Can . . . You . . . Speak . . . English?

MARY:
Why is he yelling at us? Is he angry?

BROTHER:
He must be upset at something. Can you speak Gaelic?

BOY:
Oh, this is ridiculous. I am looking for my dog. It ran away from our house. It is not used to being outside. It will be getting hungry.

BROTHER:
He did not touch you, did he?

BOY:
What are you saying? Do . . . you . . . know . . . how . . . to . . . speak . . . English?

BROTHER:
Do . . . you . . . speak . . . Gaelic?

BOY:
I do not understand what you are saying? Oh bother. My father was right!

BROTHER:
I speak English a little.

BOY:
What language were you speaking? Irish?

BROTHER:
It's called Gaelic. It is the language of our land. Who are you?

BOY:
Charles. What is your name?

BROTHER:
John. This is my sister, Mary. What you are doing here?

BOY:
My father is the owner of this land. Mr. Charles Coote, Esq.

BROTHER:
MY father owns this land! Just as his father did before him and his father before him.

BOY:
He *rents* land from my father, as do many others like him. Some day it will all be mine; and you will be renting from me.

BROTHER:
What are you doing here?

BOY:
Mother and I are visiting. It is my first time in Ireland. Where do you live?

BROTHER:
We live in your big house when you are in England.

BOY:
What did you say?

BROTHER:
I was teasing you, now. We live here.

BOY:
Where is your house?

BROTHER:
Here silly.

BOY:
In there? It looks like a place for animals to live.

BROTHER:
That is how your father treats us.

BOY:
My father is a kind and generous man.

BROTHER:
Sure, he must be. Otherwise he would not let us use the mud from his land to make our house with.

BOY:
It is made of dirt? How many rooms do you have in there?

BROTHER:
One. How many do you have?

BOY:
Thirty five. I think. I tried to count them all.

BROTHER:
That's a lot of mud.

BOY:
No. It is made of bricks and . . . My father is right. He says you Irish people are stupid. You do not even speak English properly.

BROTHER:
How is your Gaelic? Sure, we are not bad people, really.

BOY:
You do seem quite normal. For Catholics. Is it really made of dirt?

BROTHER:
Sure.

BOY:
How do you keep warm?

BROTHER:
We burn peat on the fire.

BOY:
Peat?

BROTHER:
It is dirt that we dig from the bog and we burn it in our fire.

BOY:
You do a lot of things with dirt. Do you eat it too?

BROTHER:

In a way we do. Potatoes come from the ground and are covered with dirt, sure.

BOY:

We eat potatoes, too. With our roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

BROTHER:

That is what we eat. Potatoes. With salt often to make them taste better.

BOY:

You only eat potatoes? That is all?

BROTHER:

Sure, that is all we have. And skim milk and buttermilk to drink.

BOY:

Why not buy more food? There are many things you can buy.

BROTHER:

We do not have any money. Pa works all day in his wheat field, to pay the rent on the field to your Father.

BOY:

So you could make bread from the wheat....

BROTHER:

It is too expensive to eat.

BOY:

Too expensive? But you do not have to buy it.

BROTHER:

Would you like to play with us?

BOY:

Could I?

BROTHER:

Sure. We are playing hide and seek.

BOY:

Just don't tell my father or any of his men I have been playing with you. He will tan my hide.

BROTHER:
Promise. You two go and I'll find you.

SCENE 2, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND, 1847

CHORUS:
SONG: BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART TWO)

A sadness hov'ring o'er the land
Was kept from this young girl.
Her Ma and Da and grandpa, too
Protected her young world.
She laughed and played, and grew up
In a loving family
Who struggled in the present times
But treasured their history.
Though struggled in those troubled times;
Found solace in history.

SONG: INSTRUMENTAL – BRIAN BORU MARCH

LIGHTS UP ON LOWER LEVEL. IT IS SMALL, CRAMPED DARK.
GRANDFATHER HAS BEEN PLAYING A FIDDLE. ALSO THERE ARE MARY,
BROTHER, MOTHER AND FATHER. ALL CLAP WHEN HE IS FINISHED.

MARY:
Tell us a story, Grandda.

GRAND:
Don't you think you should be heading off to bed?

MARY/
BROTHER:
Please.

FATHER:
You can have one story . . . Then bedtime.

GRAND: (SPOKEN)
For one great man, our Ireland
Was not enough our own.
Invaded by the Norsemen
Who sat upon our throne.

They tyrannized our people
And country through and through.
They conquered all . . . but one man:
The Man was Brian Boru.

Now, Brian and Mathgamian,
His brother, and soldier, too.
Brought an army into Limerick
And thrashed the Vikings true.
Once more peace came to Munster
Under Mathgamian's steady hand,
Till the Vikings sent an assassin
And his blood soaked in the land.

Brian then became the ruler.
And as he always planned
Without a drop of blood shed United Ireland.
But peace, again, was shattered
When Vikings came once more
King Sitric and King Sigurd
Sent armies by the score.

At Clontarf, on Good Friday,
Outnumbered to the man
His armies fought together
Regardless of their clan.
They fought for Brian's Kingship
They fought in freedom's name
They fought for those who died before
So deaths be not in vain.

Despite their lack of numbers
Brian's forces took the day
And struck a blow for Ireland.
Sending Vikings on their way.
They had tyrannized our people
And country through and through.
They conquered all . . . but one man:
That Man was Brian Boru.

GRAND: (SPOKEN)

Clontarf . . . Good Friday . . . 1014 . . . remains one of the most glorious days in Irish history. And one of the saddest. Tragically, Brian was killed by a fleeing Norseman. He was, indeed the best of Kings. Today he lives on in all of us. Shortly after his death, the people of Ireland began the practice of using

hereditary surnames—and you, John and Mary Ann O'Brien—are a proud descendant of him. I want you to promise me you'll pass this on to your children just as my Grandda did to me.

MARY:
I will Grandda.

GRAND:
Good girl. May Heaven's Light always shine in your eyes, Mary.

MOTHER:
Now it is time for you to go to sleep, little one.

MARY:
Do I have to, Ma? Just one more story, Grandda. Please.

GRAND:
You listen to your, Ma. I'll tell you another tomorrow night.

GRANDFATHER KISSES MARY AND HER BROTHER. MARY AND BROTHER GET READY TO SLEEP IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM.

GRAND:
They are lovely children; so full of life and happiness.

FATHER:
They're too innocent to know anything about the real world. Which is a blessing, I suppose. I worry so much for them both, Da. What kind of Ireland is it going to be for them? We are foreigners in our own land.

GRAND:
Sure, Ireland could do with a man like Brian Boru today.

FATHER:
I think we have got one, Da. The Liberator.

GRAND:
Daniel O'Connell?

FATHER:
Aye, himself. I heard it said that a quarter-of-a-million were at Tara to hear him speak. And he's got another meeting coming up at Clontarf where there's going to be even more.

GRAND:
At Clontarf, you say?

FATHER:

I do say. If there's any hope for our homeland and the future of our children it's going to be Daniel O'Connell. Only he can stand up to the English. Didn't he do that in '29 when he got us Catholics our rights back?

GRAND:

Don't be daft, will ya. The only people he helps are the rich Catholics. Not poor folks like us.

FATHER:

This time it will be different, Da.

GRAND:

And how is that so?

FATHER:

He's demanding repeal of the Act of Union.

GRAND:

Repeal, is it? Good luck to him, I says.

FATHER:

And he'll do it. He's got all the Irish people behind him. We needs to be an independent country, to control our own soil without the English telling us what we can do about it.

GRAND:

You'll get no argument from me on that point, son. It's just that I don't think the English are going to give in all that easily.

FATHER:

I think he's all the hope we've got right now, Da.

SCENE 3, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND, 1847

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART THREE)

Soon winter was upon them.
Potato crops were bad.
Though mother kept them happy

Their father looked so sad.
He needed to support them
And went from town-to-town
In search of food or work there
But neither could be found.
He searched in Limerick city
But nothing could be found.

FATHER:

By the sweet mother of Jesus, I'm telling you the truth, Ma. Boat loads of food being shipped to England. For sure, I saw it with my own eyes, didn't I. They was full of oats, pigs, cattle . . . Sailing down the Shannon on their way to England . . . And all we could do was watch, and listen as the sounds of the animals drowned the noise our empty stomachs were making.

MOTHER:

What are we going to do, Thomas? I can't let my babies die!

FATHER:

That is not going to happen. I'm strong and healthy. I will find work. Sure I will. We'll make it through this . . .

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON MOTHER AND FATHER WITH A SMALL SPOT SHINING ON MARY WHO HAS BEEN LISTENING TO THE CONVERSATION IN HER CORNER OF THE ROOM. MARY PUTS HER HANDS TOGETHER IN PRAYER.

MARY:

Dear Jesus, why do you dislike us? Have we done something wrong?

SCENE 4, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND, 1847

A STOUT WELL-DRESSED ENGLISHMAN IS IN A DOMINANT POSITION OVER FAMILY AS HE WATCHES THEM REMOVE THEIR MEAGRE POSSESSIONS FROM THE HOVEL.

MOTHER:

Please, sir. You can not throw us out of our home. Mr. Coote said we could stay.

ENGLISH:

Mr. Coote does not have time to worry about you.

MOTHER:

But he said he does care about us, and I think he really does.

FATHER:

It is all right, love. Sir, I think he does care. See, he gave me that work building the wall at his house so I could pay the rent. There must be some more work I can do. I can do anything.

ENGLISH:

There's nothing else Mr. Coote can do to help. He may care, sometimes too much I fear, but it is MY responsibility to ensure the rents are paid on this land. You don't understand the law ... As long as you occupy his land, he must pay higher taxes. Even if you do not pay rent, he still must pay. The only way he can survive is for the land to be unoccupied. Mr. Coote could go bankrupt and lose everything saving you. I cannot let that happen.

ENGLISHMAN LOOKS INSIDE THE HOVEL

You people live like pigs.

MOTHER:

No, sir, we are not like pigs at all. Pigs get fattened up before they're killed.

ENGLISH:

Insolent woman. Don't blame me if you are hungry. If you Irish were to have less children there would be plenty of food to eat.

FATHER:

There might be enough for us all, sir, if the British were not sending that same food to England when it is needed here. I saw it with my own eyes when I was in Limerick.

ENGLISH:

I do not need an ignorant Irish to tell me what to do or what not to do. Instead of placing blame for misfortune of your own making on others perhaps you should be praying to your Pope in Rome for help. I understand he has lots of riches. Maybe he can sell some of his paintings to buy you food.

FATHER:

You can't force us off this land. It is our land! Daniel O'Connell will liberate us from your tyranny, and will send you packing back home to England where you belong!

ENGLISH:

I would not count on that.

FATHER:

You don't know Daniel O'Connell.

ENGLISH:

Apparently you do not know a lot, either. His meeting at Clontarf was prohibited and the Liberator is now trying to liberate *himself* from prison.

THIS SUCKS THE LIFE OUT OF FATHER. ENGLISHMAN LAUGHS HEARTILY

MOTHER:

In the name of God, sir, please do not do this. We have nowhere to go.

ENGLISH:

That is not my problem. If you stay here on his Lordship's property he will have to be responsible for you. You must be off his land by the end of the day.

MOTHER:

But what about my children? Where do we live? Where do we go? What do we eat?

ENGLISH:

There are newly-opened poorhouses. And there are soup kitchens around the country.

ENGLISH:

Master Charles. You are just in time to learn how to deal with lazy ignorant tenants. Some day all of this land will be yours and you will have to deal with those who don't pay their rent.

BROTHER:

Hello again.

ENGLISH:

You know this boy?

BOY:

I have never seen him in my life, Jones. I don't know what he means.

BROTHER:

You have got to speak to your father for us. He can not throw us out of our home. We have got nowhere else to go. Please help us. Please.

ENGLISH:

You keep your dirty hands off him.

AS BROTHER FALLS BACK HIS FATHER COME FORWARD TO HELP HIM AND CONFRONTS ENGLISHMAN.

FATHER:

I'll not have you hurting my family no matter who you work for!

ENGLISHMAN LASHES OUT AT FATHER HITTING HIM VERY HARD WITH A STICK. FATHER FALLS TO THE GROUND BADLY HURT AND BLEEDING FROM THE HEAD

MOTHER:

You brute! Why don't you leave us all alone. Why don't you go back to England. Get out of our country!

ENGLISH:

The only people leaving are you animals. Now get up and get your things out.

SCENE 5, COUNTY LIMERICK, IRELAND, 1849

FATHER IS LYING ON ROUGH BED BEING COMFORTED BY MOTHER.

MOTHER:

I do not want to lose any more children, Thomas. We have lost our house this past year—a house we can replace. But children we cannot.

FATHER:

If they stay they will die of starvation. But, if they go to America they have a chance of living.

MOTHER:

Things might get better in Ireland. They might have a life here.

FATHER:

My love, things have been bad for two years now. How are they going to get better?

MOTHER:

They are my life!

FATHER:

When I was in Limerick last I heard some talking about how bad things are. One

had come from Skibereen. As he entered the town he thought it was deserted. Not a living soul was to be seen. Then he heard what he thought were voices coming from one of the houses. So he went over and pushed the door open. What he saw resembled no living thing he had ever known. Six living skeletons. Pitiful creatures that used to be human beings--a family living in filth, just huddled together waiting for death to take them in its arms, away from misery. He got out of that place as fast as his legs would carry him to escape the horrible sight. But he couldn't for wherever he went in that village he came across dozens of pitiful sights. I don't want our children to live in Ireland if it means we are condemning them to death. I want them to grow up healthy, have children of their own, and maybe someday, there will come a time when they can return to the land of their fathers when it once again free of suffering. Ellen says two of the children can go and stay with her and Denis in America.

MOTHER:

Two? What happens to our other three children? What becomes of them here?

FATHER:

There is a new Union Workhouse in the city. Sure, we can there and wait for . . . whatever happens.

SCENE 6, ABOARD A TRANSATLANTIC SHIP, 1850

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART FOUR)

One million died of hunger
More died from their disease.
Death had no favoured victim
All taken with equal ease.
For many there was safety;
One million left its shore.
For many it was heartbreak;
They'd see their child no more.
For parents it was heartbreak
They'd kiss their child no more.

LIGHTS UP ON SAILOR ON THE TOP OF THE PLATFORM HE IS ON THE DECK OF A SHIP. MOTHER, MARY AND BROTHER ARE BELOW HIM

SAILOR:

Get those kids aboard if they're coming or else they'll be standing all the way to America.

MOTHER:

Now, now, there's nothing to be afraid of, my babies. The captain here will take care of you. Won't you, sir.

SAILOR:

Sure. I'll take care of them.

MOTHER:

See. And the man who we paid the fare to said children are taken care of. You'll be well fed, he told me. I've packed you a little bit extra so you keep up your strength. John, listen to me now. You need to take care of yourself and your sister.

BROTHER:

Ma, I do not want to go to America. I want to stay with you. Here. I can be the man of the family.

MOTHER:

You can not stay in Ireland, my darling. There is nothing for you here but an early grave. I have lost your Pa to the English murderers, your Grandda to the hunger. I do not want you dying, too. I have sold everything I could to pay your passage.

MARY:

Have we done something wrong, Ma? Is that why you are sending us away?

MOTHER:

Oh no no no. You have done nothing wrong, my Angel. Your sister and brother will be waiting for you when you get to America. They will take care of you. Although it breaks my heart to see my babies go away, it is a much better place you are going to than that you are leaving.

MARY AND HER BROTHER CLIMB UP A LADDER TO THE TOP OF THE PLATFORM.

SAILOR:

I'll be taking care of that for you.

BROTHER:

But it is our food for the voyage to America.

SAILOR:

If you want any food at all you'd better do as you are told. You understand me?
Now get down there.

MARY AND HER BROTHER GO DOWN TO THE HOLD. THE TRAP DOOR IS SLAMMED SHUT. THE LIGHTS GO OFF. A DIM LIGHT BELOW SHOWS MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN CRAMMED INTO A SMALL SPACE. IT IS DARK AND SCARY AS THEY HUDDLE TIGHT. THEY SWAY BACK AND FORTH WITH THE ROUGH OCEAN.

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART FIVE)

The coffin ships were crowded
And riddled with disease
A third of those who sailed them
Died on the open seas.
The sailing could be forty days
Or hundred twenty more.
They prayed and starved and thirsted
Until they reached the shore
They prayed and starved and thirsted
Waiting to see the shore.

MOANS OF MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE HEARD. 'WE NEED AIR', 'WE NEED FOOD', 'PLEASE HELP ME', ETC.

SUDDENLY THE HATCH IS OPENED FORCING A SHAFT OF LIGHT ON THE HUDDLED TRAVELERS. THEY COVER THEIR EYES. THE SAILOR THROWS WATER ON THE PEOPLE BELOW. HE LAUGHS AND CLOSES THE HATCH AGAIN. THERE IS BEDLAM BELOW. MARY IS SQUASHED AS THE OTHERS TRY TO GET SOME OF THE WATER. MEANWHILE ON TOP THE SAILOR THROWS A BODY OVERBOARD

SONG: JESUS, SAVIOUR, PILOT ME.

IN THIS TRADITIONAL HYMN ONE VOICE WILL BEING, THEN ANOTHER WILL JOIN IN, SO THAT WHEN WE REACH THE LAST VERSE ALL ARE SINGING A CAPPELLA

Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
over life's tempestuous sea;
unknown waves before me roll,
hiding rock and treacherous shoal.
Chart and compass come from thee;

Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

As a mother stills her child,
thou canst hush the ocean wild;
boisterous waves obey thy will,
when thou sayest to them, "Be still!"
Wondrous sov'reign of the sea,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

When at last I near the shore,
and the fearful breakers roar
'twixt me and the peaceful rest,
then, while leaning on thy breast,
may I hear thee say to me,
"Fear not, I will pilot thee."

SCENE 7, POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK, 1855

WE SEE HAPPY PEOPLE DANCING, LAUGHING AND HAVING FUN,
INCLUDING RICHARD AND MARY AYLWARD.

RICHARD:
Thank you for a lovely service, Father Riordan.

RIORDAN:
"May God grant you always
A Sunbeam to warm you
A moonbeam to charm you
A sheltering Angel so nothing can harm you."

It does my heart good to unite two young people like you and Mary under God's watchful, loving eye. I know the troubles the both of you have faced in the past few years, and I hope...I know... you have a good future ahead of you. I don't think I have seen a young couple so much in love.

MARY:
If Lakeville had a church, Father, we might never have met.

RICHARD:
Mary came here to Poughkeepsie to worship in your beautiful church, and that is how we came to know each other.

MARY:
I knew he was the man for me right away.

RICHARD:
At first I thought Mary was a little young

MARY:
. . . And you being the older wiser man of 18 . . . All of two years more experience in life.

RICHARD:
What's wrong, Mary?

MARY:
What do you mean? 'tis my wedding day. Sure there's nothing wrong.

RICHARD:
And I know there is.

MARY:
I was thinking of my Ma, wishing she could be here with us. Maybe we could save some money and send for her so she could come to America and live with us.

RICHARD:
And we will.

MARY:
Oh thank you, Richard.

RICHARD:
After we move.

MARY:
Move? Why are we leaving? I like it here.

RICHARD:
It may not be safe, Mary.

MARY:
Of course it is safe. Richard, I've lived in Ireland, New York City, Connecticut, and now Poughkeepsie: And I am only 16 years of age. I want to settle down here, have a home and raise a family with you!

RICHARD:

There are people in this part of America who don't like Catholics. They're called "Know-Nothings".

MARY:

Well, there you are. Sure, what more do you need. Know Nothing.

RICHARD:

It is not a joke. They kill Catholics.

RIORDAN:

And themselves. One of their leaders William Poole was killed earlier this year in New York City.

MARY:

The police will protect us. They can't break the law.

RIORDAN:

In some places in New York, they act as the law. They kill Catholics and get away with it.

RICHARD:

And they want to be the law across America.

MARY:

Do you know what he is talking about, Father?

RIORDAN:

Sadly, yes, Mary. They're called the "Know-Nothings", but their official name is "The American Party". Our last President, Millard Fillmore is a member, and next year he will be running for president again

MARY:

But what does this have to do with us?

RIORDAN:

They are trying to be elected to be the government in America. They are saying they are going to stop Germans and Irish Catholics from coming here, that you would have to wait 21 years before you could become citizens or even vote.

RICHARD:

They are Protestants, and determined to keep America a Protestant country.

MARY:

Surely, they will not win. This is America. This is where people come to live free, away from hatred we left behind. Are you telling me the Americans are no better

than the English.

RICHARD:

Not all of them, but a lot of Americans are English and Irish Protestants.

MARY:

When comes the time for us to stop running, Richard? I have not asked a lot from life. All I want is to have a warm dry home, and a loving happy Christian family. Why is that so hard to find? So where are we off to then?

RICHARD:

Canada West.

MARY:

Canada West? Mary Mother of Jesus. Is that any better than here? Sure, the place is full of English. They have the Union Flag and Queen Victoria. You have a queer idea of a better place, Richard Aylward. But you are my husband and I respect you, and I will obey your wishes.

RICHARD:

I've got an aunt there in a place called Puschlinch who says there is land available for free for those who are willing to work hard. I've got some money put by to get us there.

MARY:

Can we put a house on it?

RICHARD:

We can do anything we want on it. It'll be ours. You're going to have your warm, dry home and your happy family. I promise you.

CHORUS:

SONG: BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART SIX)

In Feb'ry eighteen fifty-six
They moved to Canada West.
She loved her home in New York State
But Richard knew what's best.
At Puslinch for the summer months
Then to the Addington Road.
They moved again to Kaladar
And had a joyful home
For four years they loved Kaladar

PAUSE

If only they'd kept that home

SCENE 8, HASTINGS COUNTY, 1860

CHORUS MEMBER "1" STANDS ON SCAFFOLDING TO ATTRACT OTHER MEMBERS OF CHORUS

SONG: COME UP TO THE NEW HASTINGS ROAD

CHORUS 1:
Free land!

CHORUS 2:
Free land?

CHORUS 3:
Free land?

CHORUS 4:
Free land?

CHORUS 1:
Yes, my friends. Free land!

CHORUS 1:
If you're tired of moving around
And want a home of your own,
Come try your hand
On northern land
Head up to the new Hastings Road.

The southern lots are all filled up
The old has all been sold.
The north is new;
Awaiting you.
Come up to the new Hastings Road.

CHORUS 3:
How much land can I have?

CHORUS 1:
One hundred acres all for free.
It's the only place to go.
The land is rich.
You'll find that its
Easy growing on the new Hastings Road.

CHORUS 4:
What is the weather like?

CHORUS 1:
Days of summer are long and dry
The winters are not too cold
The snow is light.
It's all just right
For living on the new Hastings Road.

But before too long
It will all be gone.
There is only so much land.
This new frontier
Will be gone this year.
Supply is short of demand.

If I were new to this country
And wanted to know where to go,
I would have no doubt,
I'd be heading right out
To my land on the new Hastings Road.

But before too long
It will all be gone.
There is only so much land.
This new frontier
Will be gone this year.
Supply is short of demand.

THE CHORUS GOES TO HIM TO MIME SIGNING DOCUMENTS. RICHARD AYLWARD IS ONE OF THEM. MARY APPEARS AND HE SHOWS HER THE PAPERS. SHE SMILES.

DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES MARY AND RICHARD MIME CLEARING THE LAND. OTHER MEN AND WOMEN COME ALONG HELPING TO BUILD THE HOUSE.

MARY:

“May the roof above us never fall in, and may the friends gathered below it never fall out”.

THE FRIENDS ALL HUG AND LEE RICHARD AND MARY ALONE.

RICHARD:

What do you see, Mary?

MARY:

Trees.

RICHARD:

What else do you see?

MARY:

More trees.

RICHARD:

Other than trees.

MARY:

Rocks. A lot of rocks.

RICHARD:

I'm trying to get you to use your imagination. I want you to picture children playing happily. There will be soon enough food growing so we will never have to be hungry again. Like the man told us we can raise animals that'll help us work the fields, and provide us nourishment over the winter. We will clean the land to plant the crops. Can you see it, Mary, can you see it?

MARY:

I think so, Richard. The trees kind of get in the way, though. Yes, my love, Surely I can see it. It's going to be wonderful. Are you sure it's ours?

RICHARD:

Of course, I am. It's ours. We simply have to stay here for four years then we get the deed. We own it. No one can take it away from us. I'll fix up this house better.

MARY:

Oh, Richard, my love, it is wonderful now.

RICHARD:

Thank you for saying that.

MARY:

Richard Patrick Aylward. I am not "saying" it is wonderful. It is what I feel in my heart.

RICHARD:

Truly?

MARY:

Truly.

RICHARD:

It is not a palace, mind you.

MARY:

Oh, yes it is my darling. It is surely a palace to me. We have both lived in bog houses and in ditches covered with branches. This truly is a palace. And it is ours. And no one can take it away from us. Now we have a real home for our children.

RICHARD:

Don't think me daft but . . .

MARY:

What is it?

RICHARD:

Well ... it is almost as if the Good Lord meant for us to come here. Think about it, Mary. We're standing here on this spot in Wicklow Township, just like back home. Across the road is Monteagle Township. There's Mayo Township and even a Limerick Township. There is a Carlow—where I am from. Now Mary Ann O'Brien, if Limerick does not make you feel at home nothing will.

MARY:

You are right, Mr. Aylward. The neighbours are nice people, too.

RICHARD:

Yes they are. And I'm sure there will be other folks from back home around here.

MARY:

Do you ever think of going back?

RICHARD:

To Ireland?

MARY:

Yes, silly, to Ireland.

RICHARD:

No I do not. This is where our babies were born. Away from strife, hunger, oppression. They'll grow up and have a good normal life. This is our land. No British government is going to take it away from us. Look at it. Do you know how many families this would have to support back home? Even with the Good Lord himself helping with the payments we would never in a million years own a place like this in Ireland. Here, it is ours. I'll get a job. There's lots of things I can do. I can work with my hands, I've a strong back. We'll save some money so we can bring your Ma here, and get her out of Ireland.

MARY:

Oh, that would be so wonderful, Richard, if we could. You know what else I see out there? Something I have been afraid to have. Dreams.

MARY TAKES RICHARD'S HANDS AND THEY KNEEL IN PRAYER

“Bless this house, O' Lord we pray,
make it safe by night and day;
Bless these walls, so firm and stout
keep want and trouble out:
Bless the roof and chimney tall,
let thy peace lie over all.
Bless the door that it may prove
ever open to joy and love.
Bless these windows, shining bright,
letting in God's heavenly light;
Bless the folk who dwell within,
keep them pure and free from sin.
Bless us that one day we
may dwell, O Lord with Thee.”

SCENE 9, HASTINGS COUNTY, 1861

RICHARD AND MARY ARE JOINED AT THE TABLE BY NEW IRISH FRIENDS

RICHARD:

When we were building the house, little Mary was worrying if we would ever meet anyone. Then would believe it some of the other neighbours helped us

raise the frame to our house not a week after. I also told her there were people from back home like us.

NEIGHBOR:

There's lots of us around, and if you want to get a hold of us, just pour some good Irish whisky and we will be right over.

REV LAWL:

Or . . . Should you be wanting to be confessing something.

MARY:

So there is a Catholic Church in the area, Father.

REV LAWL:

Sadly no.

NEIGHBOR:

Father Lawlor is of the Kingston Diocese.

REV LAWL:

From Sugar Island. But me and the horse make regular visits here.

NEIGHBOR:

How long have you been here in Hastings County?

MARY:

Not long at all, really. It is still all kind of new. But now that we know we have friends like you around we feel a lot better.

NEIGHBOR:

You will need as many friends as you can get.

RICHARD:

Why do you say that?

NEIGHBOR:

This is not any easy place to be an Irish Catholic.

MARY:

Get on with you. We left all of that behind.

REV LAWL:

There are a lot of folks here that don't like the Catholic Irish. Particularly the Protestant Irish here. They believe what other folks tells them: that the Irish people are dirty, that we fight, that we are uneducated, that we live like animals, that we're drunkards.

MARY:

Well, once the people around here get to know us they will find out first hand that we are none of those things. We just want to start a new life.

NEIGHBOR:

They may not let you. I have been in this area a long time. Me Ma and Da and brother and me came with nearly 200 families that Peter Robinson brought from Ireland in the early '20s. We came with him and settled what we called Peterborough. Unfortunately, there were also a lot of English and Scottish immigrants that brought other things with them--their prejudices.

REV. LAWL:

And Irish Protestants, too. Like many of your neighbours.

NEIGHBOR:

And things are not getting any better. I know. I work with Irish groups all across the area. Last year five hundred Orangemen rioted in Peterborough to stop our St. Patrick's Day parade. Father Lawlor can back me up on this point. Of the 20 women prisoners in the Kingston penitentiary two are French, one is black and the rest are Irish. This is not because we are bad people, it is because we won't let people push us around and treat us. How in God's name can you get fair treatment when the member of parliament and the publisher of the newspaper in Belleville are both staunch Orangemen.

MARY:

We don't want trouble from anyone. We have a family to raise, and we are going to give them a good home here. Canada West is a country of opportunity. Good lord, I thought this was supposed to be a party. Come on, Richard, let's see if those old legs can still dance.

MUSIC PLAYS, THEY HAVE A DANCE AND LAUGH THEN STOPS ABRUPTLY. THE LIGHTS GO OFF ON THEM AND SIMOULRTANEUOUSLY UP ON JUDGE DRAPER ON TOP OF PLATFORM TO THE SOUND OFF THREE BANGS OF THE GAVEL.

JUDGE:

Mary Ann Aylward. You have been charged with feloniously and unlawfully causing the death of William Munro. How do you plead?

Lights off. End of Part One

PART TWO

SCENE 10, BELLEVILLE, 1862

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY ALYWARD (PART SEVEN)

In Belleville, eighteen sixty-two
Their lives were not their own.
They could not see their children dear
Pa and she were kept alone.
The journals said some nasty things;
Their names dragged through the mud.
All they wanted was a happy home
And raise their children good.
They came to build a happy home
To build a life that's good.

LIGHTS DOWN ON CHORUS AND UP ON MARY. THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE IN THE CELL OF MARY FOUR DAYS PRIOR TO HER TRIAL. REV. BRENNAN ENTERS ACCOMPANIED BY MR. FINN.

BRENNAN:

Mary, this is Mr. Finn. He has been appointed by the court as your lawyer along with Mr. O'Reilly.

FINN:

Hello, Mary.

MARY:

When can I see my babies, sir?

FINN:

I am going to try to get them here very soon, Mary.

MARY:

I miss them so much.

FINN:

I am doing everything within my power to see that you are reunited with your children next week.

MARY:

Bless you, sir. I just want to go home with my babies and with my

husband. I've been locked up here for nearly five months.

BRENNAN:

We are doing everything we can, my child.

MARY:

When can Richard and me go home?

FINN

I have to be honest with you, Mary. It is not going to be easy. We have the problem of getting witnesses who support you to come to Belleville for the trial. You see, the Crown—that's the government lawyer whose job it is to persuade the jury to find you guilty—he Crown has government money to bring their witnesses from the northern part of the county to Belleville for the trial. Their witnesses are even being lodged in local hotels. But we have no money for that, Mary.

MARY:

There are many people who will come to tell you how peaceable we are, sir.

FINN

I know that. There are those who I wanted to put on the stand to show that you and Richard are nice, quiet people, but they couldn't travel the four days to come here.

BRENNAN:

Mr. Finn will do everything he can for you and Richard, Mary.

FINN:

Not all of the witnesses the Crown is calling are hostile towards you.

MARY:

When will it all begin?

FINN

Mr. Wilson, the Solicitor General, who is prosecuting the case, had to return to Toronto for the weekend, so it will begin Monday morning and will last just the one day, I expect. I will come to see you on Saturday should I require any more information.

MARY:

Can I tell the judge what happened?

FINN:

I'm sorry. You are not allowed to address the court or to appear as a

witness in your own defence.

MARY:

But I want everyone to know what really occurred that horrible day.

FINN:

I understand, Mary. I will do the best I can to get your side of the story across to the Judge and jury.

MARY:

I have been writing letters to my children. I can at least tell them my story.

BRENNAN:

Mary, you will soon be able to tell them yourself when you and Richard go home with them.

FINN:

Mary. And you, Father.

BRENNAN:

Is there something wrong?

FINN:

There is something very important which you can do over the next two days Father.

BRENNAN:

I will do all I can.

FINN:

You must understand this is very difficult for me to say. You need to counsel Mary, here, and Richard not to set their hopes on being found not guilty.

BRENNAN:

Why do you say such a thing? You are their lawyer! Don't you think . . .

FINN:

Please listen to me, Father.

BRENNAN:

The facts speak for themselves. The death of Mr. Munro was a tragic accident and nothing more.

MARY:

Do you think I did it, Mr Finn? Do you think I purposely killed a man?

FINN:
I do not, Mary. I do not think that at all.

MARY:
For sure, it doesn't sound much like you think I am innocent.

FINN:
Mary, please. Father. I do believe you. I have interviewed as many people as I could. I have read all of the documents. I have spoken at length with Mr. O'Reilly, and gone over his discussions with you.

BRENNAN:
Then you must see it was all a tragic accident.

FINN:
Yes, Father. I agree. But something happened today which may affect the verdict.

BRENNAN:
What could possibly do that? Has some new evidence or witness come forward?

FINN:
No, Father, nothing in fact to do with this case at all.

BRENNAN:
Then what?

FINN:
Let me explain. I was co-counsel for the defence at a trial today of a man named Morris Moorman--you may have heard about it.

BRENNAN:
Yes, I recall reading about it in the Hastings Chronicle a few weeks ago. If I am correct, he was the man who stabbed the young fellow to death in a dispute over a bottle of liquor.

FINN:
That's right.

BRENNAN:
Tragic case.

FINN:
There were witnesses who saw him commit the murder, and the unfortunate victim told the doctor who attended him in his last hours that it was indeed Moorman who stabbed him.

BRENNAN:

It would seem to be a very sad and straight-forward case. But I don't understand how this affects Mary.

FINN:

My fellow-counsel and I appealed for a verdict of manslaughter rather than murder. It was the best we thought we could do. (Pause) Today, he was found "not guilty".

BRENN:

My God! Not guilty? How could they come to such a verdict.

FINN:

Belleville is a small town ... the jury knew the man involved and didn't want to send him to jail.

MARY:

But isn't that a good sign for me and Richard, Mr. Finn?

BRENNAN:

I agree with, Mary. If such a heinous crime can go unpunished doesn't that mean that one in which such doubt exists as in Mary's case they to can be acquitted of the charges.

FINN:

Sadly, I expect the opposite, Father.

BRENNAN:

Why?

FINN:

The crowd, other than Moorman's supporters, that is, were outraged. Even the Judge, Chief Justice Draper, was stunned. The shock was obvious on his face. *He* will be the Judge in Mary and Richard's case. There's more, Father. The correspondent from the Chronicle was in attendance

MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS SPEAK INDIVIDUALLY.

CHORUS:

We do not charge the jury with any corruption . . .

CHORUS:

. . . they were no doubt conscientious . . .

CHORUS:

... but in our opinion their verdict was misguided and erroneous.

CHORUS:

We fear it will operate injuriously on the best interests of society.

CHORUS:

If ever man is permitted to take the life of his neighbour with impunity . . .

CHORUS:

. . . in defence of a bottle of whisky

CHORUS:

. . . we might as well reside in the lawless wild west.

CHORUS:

. . . It is our hope that we shall see no more such miscarriages of justice

CHORUS:

. . . and travesties as this will not happen again.

CHORUS:

Murderers must pay for their crimes and not be set free.

FINN:

There is no doubt in my mind that he is talking about Mary and Richard, and the only verdict for them is guilty.

MARY:

Are we going to hang, Mr. Finn?

BRENNAN:

Now, Mary, Mr. Finn will do . . .

MARY:

With all respect, Father, I need to hear from Mr. Finn. I am not a child.

FINN:

Mr. O'Reilly and I are looking at what we need to do to file an appeal should you be found guilty.

MARY:

So this is how our lives end. Thousands of miles away from home in a strange land where we are hated and cursed simply because we are different. We are spat upon because of our religion, our beliefs. We travelled dangerous seas, endured hellish conditions on boats that we thought would not make it through

each night. We have lived in two countries where people wanted to kill us, just because of who we are.

BRENNAN:

Mary, I know what you are feel . . .

MARY:

What do you know I am feeling, Father Brennan? Can you feel the pain of not seeing your husband for four months? The man you love and wanted to spend the rest of your life with? I have not seen my children for four months. And now they are someone else's children. My babies are living with new families. Richard and me are no longer their parents. I brought them into this world, and I am not their mother any more.

FINN:

If we win, you will get your children back.

MARY:

We are not going to win, are we?

FINN:

We have to believe in the justice system of this country. The country we have both adopted because we felt it could provide us with better lives.

MARY:

I am no lawyer, Mr. Finn. Just an ignorant, Irish peasant girl. But is it justice that my husband should hang beside me on the gallows for something he hasn't done. Richard put some lead in his shoulder, and that was it. Alex recovered and even said we should not hang, and yet my Richard could be killed. Is that justice? And you said there were people who wanted to come to the trial but could not afford it. Is justice only for people who are rich? Is that justice, either, Mr. Finn? And why can I not speak to the court? Others who hold grudges against me and Richard can tell falsehoods and lies, and I cannot tell the Judge that they are lies. Is that Justice?

BRENNAN:

Put your faith in God, my child.

MARY:

God? Father, I have believed in God every day of my life. I have spoken with God and I have listened to God. I thought I knew God. If God is all around . . . if God is all-seeing . . . all-knowing . . . why is he letting this happen. Why did God let the people starve in Ireland? He watched my father, grandfather and brothers and sisters die. He is watching my babies lose their loving mother and father. What is the point of believing in God?

BRENNAN:

He didn't stop his own son from dying . . . for a reason.

MARY:

I don't want to die! I am no Jesus. I am not the Son of God. I am a simple Irish girl with three babies and a husband. I have so much to live for. I have so much love to give. And I am going to die. I am so afraid. I am not ready to die.

LIGHTS DIM. ONE LIGHT REMAINS ON MARY. IT IS NOW LATER. SHE IS MORE COMPOSED. MARY IS READING A BIBLE.

MARY:

"Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise; because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." (Psalms 55)

SCENE 11, BELLEVILLE, 1862

THREE LOUD RAPS OF A GAVEL ARE HEARD. LIGHTS RISE AS JUDGE DRAPER ENTERS AND SITS ON TOP OF THE PLATFORM.

CLERK:

All rise. The Fall Assizes for the County of Hastings is now in session. His Lordship Chief Justice William Draper presiding.

JUDGE:

Mr. Finn are you and Mr. O'Reilly ready for the defence?

FINN:

We are, your Lordship.

JUDGE:

The Honourable Solicitor General Mr. Wilson, are you ready for the crown?

WILSON:
We are, your Lordship.

JUDGE:
Will the prisoners please rise. Richard Aylward, you have been charged with feloniously and unlawfully causing the death of William Munro. How do you plead?

RICHARD:
Not guilty, your Lordship.

JUDGE:
Speak up man so we can all hear you.

RICHARD:
Not guilty, your Lordship.

JUDGE:
Richard Aylward. You have also been charged with feloniously and unlawfully shooting with intent to kill and murder Alex Munro. How do you plead?

RICHARD:
Not guilty, your Lordship.

JUDGE:
Mary Ann Aylward. You have been charged with feloniously and unlawfully causing the death of William Munro. How do you plead?

MARY:
Not guilty, your Lordship.

JUDGE:
Gentlemen of the jury, if you find the facts as will be stated in the evidence you will hear to be the truth, you will bring a verdict against the prisoners. If, on the contrary, you deem the evidence justifies you arriving at an opposite conclusion, you will, of course, acquit the prisoners.

IN THIS SCENE ALL OF THE EVIDENCE IS HEARD. THERE SHOULD BE A SEAMLESS CUTTING FROM ONE WITNESS TO THE NEXT. LIGHTS WILL SHINE ON THE SPEAKERS AND CUT BETWEEN THEM IN A CINEMATIC FASHION TO KEEP THE ACTION MOVING. BOTH O'REILLY AND WILSON CAN AND SHOULD MOVE AROUND THE STAGE, CIRCLING THE WITNESSES, ETC. THE WITNESSES' TESTIMONY MAY NOT ALL BE IN SEQUENCE.

ALEX MUNRO IS BEING QUESTIONED IN COURT WHILE MARY AYLWARD'S

'TESTIMONY' IS HER LETTERS TO HER DAUGHTERS.

OREILLY:

Please state your name.

ALEX:

Alexander Munro

OREILLY:

Where do you live, Mr. Munro.

ALEX:

I live with my family on the Peterson Road where it crosses with the Hastings Road. We moved there on May the first, 1861.

WILSON:

And that would be on one of the Government free grants of land?

ALEX:

Yes, sir.

MARY:

Your Pa and me and you little girls with your sister still a baby, had moved from Kaladar to the Hastings Road in July, 1861.

WILSON:

Where would this been in relation to where the prisoners live?

ALEX:

Our land is directly across the Peterson Road from the Aylward's. The houses are 2 ½ acres from each other.

OREILLY:

Where does your family come from, Mr. Munro? What country?

ALEX:

My family is from Scotland..

WILSON:

How would you describe the Aylward's relationship with your family, Mr. Munro?

ALEX:

We were all on good terms at first, they sold us some hens so we could have our own eggs and meat. But then about haying time we started to have some problems with them.

MARY:

Your Pa worked hard to clear the land, but it was not what we expected it to be. Not much good for farming, other than some fowl and a small amount of wheat. So he had to go away quite a lot to make money by helping others around the area.

FINN:

Did you have any problems with the hens?

ALEX:

No sir.

MARY:

The hens we sold them, would keep coming back across the road and eat at the little crop we had.

ALEX:

They would wander off but they were no problem. Not until May 16, that is.

MARY:

Richard went to work at Kavanaugh's on Monday and Tuesday May 12 and 13. On Monday I sent word for him to come. I dare not put my head out the door for Munro threw stones at me and sat on the fence most of the afternoon calling me improper names. I dare not go out and drive Munro's hens out of our wheat field on Tuesday. I went once in the afternoon, and his son Alex drove me home and called me ill names.

OREILLY:

And your father? How was his relations with the Aylwards?

ALEX:

I am not aware of any trouble he had with them . . . before they killed him.

MARY:

Munro himself came out of our land and crossed into the dooryard saying he would kick me, swearing by his Jesus that all the law in Canada would not save me out of his hands. "Holy Mary, all want to do is get hold of you." I went in and shut the door against him then he went away. I went down to McCrea's and about sundown he followed me and stayed there quite a while and when Mrs. McCrea got her work done she came home with me. Wednesday Richard was home.

OREILLY:

Will you please tell the court what happened on the day when your family and the Aylward's had their tragic disagreement.

ALEX:

My father and me we were working on our own lot when we heard a shot at 4 o'clock in the afternoon on Aylward's lot. When we arrived at our house my mother told us that one of our hens was missing. My father was annoyed.

WILSON:

Annoyed. What do you mean by annoyed?

ALEX:

He was angry. I was not very angry—he was more angry than I was.

MARY:

Friday Richard worked at home. I was not well all day. I got up to get dinner for your Pa and I went to the door. I heard a shot in the wheat, went out and asked him what he was firing at.

RICHARD:

The hens. As fast as I turn them out, they come back again.

MARY:

Did you kill any of them?

RICHARD:

I don't think so. I can't be running from my work all the time to be chasing them out. But if they come again I will shoot them.

MARY:

He came in then and loaded his gun with cut lead and the pistol too before he sat down for dinner.

WILSON:

Then what did you and your father do?

ALEX:

We went across the road to the Aylward's to see what they had done with the hen. Both prisoners were in the house having dinner also two children and a little baby.

OREILLY:

What was said?

ALEX:

I didn't hear what my father said at first. The first I heard was Aylward telling my father . . .

RICHARD:
Go away, Mr Munro.

MUNRO:
I am going nowhere until I get my hen or I find out what you have done with my hen.

RICHARD:
I don't have your hen.

MUNRO:
Then you have killed it . . . I heard the shot.

RICHARD:
I did not shoot the hen but I wished I had. It keeps coming into my field.

MUNRO:
Then they must be alive. Maybe they are in the field now.

OREILLY:
What happened next?

MARY:
Munro stayed at the door for quite a while. Go home Mr. Munro and mind your own business.

MUNRO:
I will go when I am ready, you damned whore.

MARY:
You go now, Mr. Munro, and don't be calling names.

ALEX:
Mr. Aylward took a gun . . . shot gun . . . out of the house and the three of us started to the wheat field together. We walked abreast. Aylward as to the right and I was to the left of my father.

WILSON:
Did your father make any attempt to take the gun away?

ALEX:
I did not see my father try to snatch the gun, no sir.

OREILLY:
And what if he had tried? Could he have taken it away from Aylward?

ALEX:
My father was considerably older, but stronger. I don't know, sir.

OREILLY:
Was anything said during the time you walked to the field?

MUNRO:
I don't care if you have shot the hens, Aylward. Just let me have the meat.

OREILLY:
What happened next?

ALEX:
We had gone about an acre and a half from his house in a westerly direction. Aylward's house fronts to the south.

FINN:
What happened when you got to the field?

ALEX:
Aylward turned round with the gun pointing at my father.

FINN:
And your father grabbed the gun?

ALEX, RICHARD AND MUNRO ACT OUT THE SCENE AS IT IS DESCRIBED

ALEX:
My father caught the gun. Aylward had hold of the butt, my father of the muzzle.

MARY:
I heard Richard call from the field. I heard Munro swearing by Jesus he would shoot him with his own gun in place of shooting the hens.

OREILLY:
Did you come forward to help him?

ALEX:
No sir.

MARY:
I was going to run away but Richard said . . .

RICHARD:

. . . Alex is going to shoot me with my own gun!

MARY:

I turned back and ran up towards your Pa when I saw Alex having the pistol cocked.

OREILLY:

Carry on.

ALEX:

The gun was pointing at my father and had it gone off it would have hit him. Aylward drew a pistol with his right hand. My father knocked it out of his hand and told me . . .

MUNRO:

Catch it, boy!

ALEX:

Where is it?

MUNRO:

Behind you!

ALEX:

The pistol had been knocked 11 or 12 yards.

OREILLY:

Was Mrs. Aylward to be seen?

ALEX:

After picking up the pistol I saw her about 11 or 12 yards from me--about the same place where Aylward and my father had been scuffling.

OREILLY:

Was she holding anything?

ALEX:

I could not say whether she had anything in her hand or not, sir.

MARY:

I saw the old scythe laying on the ground a few yards ahead of me. I took it and ran toward him. Your Pa was down and I ran up and hit Munro one stroke.

OREILLY:

What happened next?

ALEX:

I went for the gun, and when I rose with it, Aylward was standing just before me. He had the gun pointing at me, quite close. I threw myself at his feet.

OREILLY:

And where was his gun?

ALEX:

On his right shoulder, pointing at me. He stepped back, fired and hit me.

OREILLY:

What happened then?

ALEX:

After he shot me I ran home.

OREILLY:

What were you shot with?

ALEX:

The gun was loaded with cut lead or slugs. They lodged in my back. Twenty-six were got out.

OREILLY:

Tell us again how you came to get shot. I am a little confused. Did Mr. Aylward stand over you and fire at you?

ALEX:

No sir. During the fight with my father, the gun came loose and he told me to pick it up. I jumped for it but the prisoner got it back before I could reach it. It was during the fight that the gun went off and the pellets hit me in the back.

OREILLY:

You cannot be sure then, Mr. Munro, if the prisoner actually fired at you or it is discharged by accident.

ALEX:

No sir. I never heard my father say it was his own fault or that he was to blame.

OREILLY:

Was the gun cocked at that point?

ALEX:

I don't know, sir, if it was or was not.

OREILLY:

So you cannot say for sure, Mr. Munro, if Mr. Aylward cocked the gun before pointing it at you and your father, or if during the struggle your father may have cocked the gun.

ALEX:

No sir, I do not know what I saw.

OREILLY:

Did you see Mrs. Aylward strike your father?

ALEX:

No I did not.

MARY:

I ran up and hit Monroe one strike. I did not know which one I had struck at the time. Your Pa sprang backwards and the next thing I heard was a shot. Pa turned around and asked me

RICHARD:

Are you shot?

MARY:

No. Are you?

RICHARD:

No.

MARY:

Alex and his father ran away.

RICHARD:

I'll go and get my pistol from him.

MARY:

You will not, he might shoot you again. I looked for Alex and saw his back on fire.

OREILLY:

Isn't it true, Mr. Munro, that your father felt it was an accident and the prisoners ought not to be prosecuted.

ALEX:

I don't know sir. I never heard my father say that.

WILSON:
What happened next?

ALEX:
My father walked to the house himself, and said he had been struck with a scythe.

FINN:
Was a doctor sent for immediately?

ALEX:
No sir. The doctor was sent for some days later.

MARY:
I did not mean to kill Munro, for it was in my own husband's defence that I struck the blow.

WILSON:
Where do you live, Mrs. McCrae?

MCCRAE:
I live one lot from the Aylward's in Wicklow Township. We came from Dundee in Lower Canada in the winter of '61.

OREILLY:
So you haven't known the Aylward's very long.

MCCRAE:
No sir.

OREILLY:
Have you ever had any trouble with them?

MCCRAE:
No sir. We were on good terms.

WILSON:
But is it not true, Mrs. McCrae, that the prisoners threatened to kill Munro?

MCCRAE:
I had a conversation with Mrs. Aylward in her own home when she said she would tempt Munro till he came over the fence and back up until she got him into her dooryard, when she would shoot him with a gun or a pistol and leave him dead at the door.

OREILLY:
Did she say why she would do this?

MCCRAE:
No sir. Only that she would then get two witnesses to show how he had followed her into her dooryard.

WILSON:
Was that all?

MCCRAE:
She said her husband could testify for her while she could not testify for him, if he committed the deed.

WILSON:
Do you recall the day Mr. Munro was killed?

MCCRAE:
Yes sir, I do. The prisoners had come down to my place a week before it happened to sharpen a scythe. One of my young 'uns asked if Aylward was going haying--there was no grass to cut and there was a little snow on the ground. Mrs. Aylward was turning the stone while her husband ground the scythe.

MARY:
All that Isabella McCrae swore at the trial was false, and not a word of truth in it. The scythe was sharpened for cutting under-brush, and not for any other purpose.

OREILLY:
How long have you lived in the area, Mr. Johnston?

JOHNSTON:
I have lived in Monteagle since March 1862.

OREILLY:
So being new to the area you don't know the Aylward's very well.

JOHNSTON:
No sir. Only from what my cousin had told me.

OREILLY:
Your cousin, Mr. Johnston?

JOHNSTON:
Isabella. The witness. Mrs. McCrae.

WILSON:

Tell us how you met the prisoners on the day of the murder.

JOHNSTON:

About 4 o'clock in the afternoon of that day I saw them coming along the road from their house . . . What are you doing with that gun?

MARY:

William Munro is dead.

JOHNSTON:

Dead?

MARY:

Yes, I lifted up the scythe and struck him on the head, and as that did not do I gave him another cut. Dick shot young Baldy, and if he is not dead, I hope he is.

JOHNSTON:

Why did you do that?

MARY:

I didn't mean to strike him on the head but on the neck and cut his head off!

JOHNSTON:

She showed me how she did it, and they proceeded down to the McCrae's house.

WILSON:

Where do you live, Mr. Selby.

SELBY:

About four or five miles from Munro.

OREILLY:

How long have you lived there?

SELBY:

About four years.

OREILLY:

And you had good relations with the defendants.

SELBY:

I sold them a stack of hay, and it was to get pay that I went to his place.

WILSON:
When was the next time you saw them?

MCCRAE:
Mr. and Mrs. Aylward came right down to my house after they done the deed.

WILSON:
The deed?

MCCRAE:
Killed Munro, of course. She had a gun and loaded it at the corner of our stable--the had the scythe. Mrs. Aylward said that she had cut the head off Munro and Richard has shot Alick. I says, "Surely you did not do that?!" She said she did and showed me the scythe. She held up the edge up to me, and showed me the blood on it. The edge was turned. She gave it to her husband and took the gun and capped it. My son came home and told her to get out of the house.

WILSON:
What did you do?

MCCRAE:
After a half-hour later at 4 o'clock, I went up to Munro's and found him lying on the floor fainted dead away. The floor of the house was covered with blood and a pail half-full. There was a cut on his head and one on his arm.

JUDGE:
Did Mr. Munro give any indication that he hoped to recover from his injuries?

MCCRAE:
No, sir. He never said he had any hope.

OREILLY:
Mrs. McCrae, to the best of your knowledge was the doctor called for?

MCCRAE:
No, sir.

OREILLY:
Did anyone suggest to Mr. Munro that he might live if he was attended to by a doctor?

MCCRAE:
When I told him to get a doctor he shook his head and said he did not think he could recover.

OREILLY:

So a doctor was available to help save his life but he refused to be treated?

MCCRAE:

Besides he would never have no Indian doctor near him--he would rather die.

OREILLY:

And he did, Mrs. McCrae.

WILSON:

Mr. Selby, would you please tell the court what happened on Sunday May 26.

SELBY:

It were after Munro was buried I went over to Aylward's house.

WILSON:

And what happened?

SELBY:

Mrs. Aylward said that Munro was in the habit of calling her improper names.

WILSON:

Anything else?

SELBY:

She said that he had to go for that now, and she only wished she had finished him at once

WILSON:

Did Mr. Aylward say anything?

SELBY:

Later that day, Mr. Aylward showed me the scythe that his wife had killed Munro with.

WILSON:

Is that the last time you saw the prisoners?

JOHNSTON:

I went down to the McCrae's house. James McCrae told us that Munro was very bad.

MARY:

May God increase his pain . . .

JOHNSTON:
She said.

OREILLY;
Isn't it true that you told Mrs. Aylward that you would wait in Belleville to see her hang?

MCCRAE:
No, sir, it is not! I said nothing like it. But I would like to see her hang.

OREILLY:
Had you any trouble before with Mrs. Aylward?

JOHNSTON:
Never had the slightest trouble with the woman.

FINN:
Isn't it true she had gone to a magistrate and got a warrant against you? For troubling her?

JOHNSTON:
I heard she had done that, but I never saw it.

OREILLY:
Had you heard that she said you were part of a gang?

JOHNSTON:
I was never a member of a gang.

OREILLY:
That broke into their house?

JOHNSTON:
No sir. I know nothing of this.

OREILLY:
Mr. Selby, did Mr. Aylward mention if he'd had problems with Mr. Munro before?

SELBY:
Mr. Aylward said he had been to the magistrate's to get warrants for Munro and his son. I think Munroe had been threatening Mrs. Aylward.

MARY:
I suspect Munro did throw a dead dog in my own well or where I was taking water and asked 'how I liked the soup of it'?

WILSON:

Did she say why Mr. Munro had been threatening her?

SELBY:

No sir.

WILSON:

Mr. Selby. Did Mr. or Mrs. Aylward say what would happen if Mr. Munro visited their house?

SELBY:

He had took a scythe out of the cradle, sharpened it, gave it to his wife, and told her if Munro came and Mrs. Aylward should need her assistance she was to use that.

WILSON:

“That” meaning the scythe?

SELBY:

Yes, sir.

CHORUS:

Hasting Chronicle. May 30. 1862.

CHORUS:

Horrible Murder in Monteagle.

CHORUS:

A Mr. Finlayson has just come in from the Township of Monteagle after the coroner . . .

CHORUS:

to investigate one of the most outrageous murders that has taken place in this part of the country.

CHORUS:

After a vicious attack on him, Munro died within a few minutes.

CHORUS:

It was with great exertion that the people in the neighborhood were prevented from lynching Aylward and his wife.

CHORUS:

The victim is a man of very good character and generally respected.

CHORUS:

Aylward and his wife on the other hand have been the cause of much trouble

CHORUS:

and were not only very much disliked but also very much feared.

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART EIGHT)

John Finlayson, a neighbour close,
Began the trip that day
To go advise authorities
Over 60 miles away.
The coroner was notified
As was the local Reeve.
Who took a group of local men
And the killers they would seize
It took three days to journey north
But the killers they would seize.

WILSON:

Will you tell the court your name, please.

YEOMANS:

Dr. Augustus A. Yeomans.

WILSON:

Your profession, is what, sir?

YEOMANS:

I am a medical doctor in Madoc. I also serve as the coroner.

WILSON:

Will you tell the court what happened on Saturday May 31 last and on the days following.

YEOMANS:

I was notified that there had been a fatality on the Hastings Road in the northern part of the county. Being the coroner I made plans to go to Monteagle Township which is 75 miles from Madoc. I started from Madoc on Saturday and arrived in the area on Sunday evening. I went to Munro's the next day and saw the body at 10 a.m.

WILSON:

And what did you find when you arrived, Dr. Yeomans?

YEOMANS:

I found a large incised wound on the left side of the deceased head extending three inches and cutting through the skull into the brain.

WILSON:

Would this wound have been difficult to inflict, Dr. Yeomans?

YEOMANS:

It must have been given with great violence.

WILSON:

Please continue.

YEOMANS:

Beneath that wound was a large abscess involving nearly the whole side of the brain

.

WILSON:

Where there any other wounds?

YEOMANS:

On the left arm was a wound above and near the elbow joint. The whole of the muscles were cut through. The instrument had gone nearly half way through the bone in the upper arm and fractured the bone in the joint.

WILSON:

What sort of instrument could inflict such damage, Doctor?

YEOMANS:

The wound must have been inflicted by a sharp and thin instrument as the bone was cut clean--and not fractured.

WILSON:

Would a scythe inflict such a wound?

YEOMANS:

In my opinion, yes, it would.

WILSON:

Finally, Dr. Yeomans, what would you attribute the cause of death?

YEOMANS:

The wound in the head must certainly have caused death.

OREILLY:

Dr. Yeomans, this sounds like a very serious injury.

YEOMANS:

It was serious enough to cause the death of Mr. Munro.

OREILLY:

Was death immediate?

YEOMANS:

No, sir.

OREILLY:

Did Mr. Munro die within one of two days?

YEOMANS:

No, sir. He lived for over a week.

OREILLY:

More than a week? So while the blow was serious it was not fatal.

YEOMANS:

He did die of the wound.

OREILLY:

But not right away.

YEOMANS:

Not right away.

OREILLY:

Could medical treatment have helped Mr Munro?

YEOMANS:

It was a very serious wound.

OREILLY:

Could medical treatment have helped Mr. Munro?

YEOMANS:

Possibly.

WILSON:

Please state your name.

EADUS:

William Eadus.

WILSON:
What is your occupation, Mr. Eadus?

EADUS:
I am an officer of the law.

WILSON:
Will you tell us please, how you became involved in this case.

EADUS:
I arrested them--the prisoners--on the Monday following the burial of the deceased--Mr. Munro. I asked where the scythe was that Munro was struck with. It was immediately produced. It was in a little place off the house. A woodshed.

WILSON:
Did you have to search for the scythe?

EADUS:
I think one of the prisoners got it for me.

WILSON:
And the gun?

EADUS:
I asked for the gun and got it.

OREILLY:
Mr. Eadus, can you show us the gun please.

EADUS:
No, sir.

OREILLY:
Can you show the court the scythe, then?

EADUS:
No sir, I cannot.

OREILLY:
No sir? And why not, Mr. Eadus?

EADUS:
I do not have them.

OREILLY:
Do not have them, Mr. Eadus?

EADUS:
No sir.

OREILLY:
Can you go and get them for the court to see, Mr. Eadus?

EADUS:
No sir. I cannot.

OREILLY:
And why not?

EADUS:
The scythe and gun were placed at the door of the tavern at Madoc where we were staying overnight, and in about a minute afterwards on returning to look after them, the scythe was not there.

OREILLY:
“Not there”. And the gun?

EADUS:
Also not there.

OREILLY:
What do you mean by “not there”?

EADUS:
They had been spirited away.

OREILLY:
Spirited away. Did you attempt to find these items?

EADUS:
Yes sir. A reward was offered for the return of them, but no one came forward.

OREILLY:
So you lost them.

EADUS:
I have neither got the scythe or the gun, sir.

OREILLY:
You lost them.

WILSON AND O'REILLY MAKE THEIR RESPECTIVE CLOSING ARGUMENTS.

WILSON:

Most farmers will be at a loss to know how a few hens could destroy a crop of all wheat in the middle of May. The act of shooting a neighbour's fowls for such a slight trespass proves that the Aylwards were what all the people in that vicinity considered them to be--the terror of the neighborhood, and not the amiable and immaculate innocents that their sympathisers call them. The sequence of events, the scuffle, the shootings must have all taken place in the space of a few moments, and is inconsistent with the statement that his wife saw from the house her husband attacked, and on the impulse of the moment got the scythe and came to her husband's rescue. There was not sufficient time for her to do this. The theory that the Aylwards acted in self defence is the most improbable that ever was started! Was the conduct of the female prisoner such as the conduct of an "amiable" woman? Would she have boasted of the dead and exhibited exultation the weapon reeking with her victim's blood and in her husband's presence? Would anyone but a tigress in human form have exclaimed: "May God almighty increase his pain!"? Does not such conduct prove malice of the most vindictive description, such as only can exist in the callous hearts of murderers?

OREILLY:

The witnesses tell you that Munro was a 'very' strong man, much stronger of the two—and was it to be believed, that in a moment of frenzy seeing her husband about to be overcome by a powerful man, she should seize the first weapon that came to her hand, and fly to his assistance—in doing so, she would be perfectly justified in law. The blow was no doubt struck in a moment of frenzy, and her whole after conduct can only be accounted for, by the fact, that she was labouring under a fit of insanity caused by the excitement of the scene through which she had passed. Could anything else reconcile to your minds, the idea of a woman of the appearance of the prisoner at the bar uttering sentiments such as these, "May God increase his pains," or "I am sorry I did not finish him with another blow" or "I am glad Old Baldy is dead!"? Why the utterance of these sentences, so horrible in themselves is enough to make one's blood run cold, and they are rendered doubly so by being uttered by the mouth of a woman. But even taking the worst view of the question, what evidence is there to justify you in coming to the conclusion that Aylward or his wife were the attacking parties? Did not Aylward tell Munro peaceably and quietly to go away which the latter refused to do? What did he mean by saying "perhaps the hens are there now." Was it not a challenge to come and shoot them; or was not merely a pretext to get Aylward out of the house. If you believe from the evidence that these are the facts, even taking the worst view of the case, as regards the prisoner, you will acquit the male prisoner altogether, and bring a verdict of manslaughter against the female. It would be an insult to my clients to find a verdict of guilty.

CHORUS:

SONG: THE BALLAD OF MARY AYLWARD (PART TEN)

Nine witnesses spoke for the crown;
To show the Aylward's guilt.
But only one spoke for the pair.
How would the balance tilt?

The evidence was over soon,
Just one day for the trial.
The jurymen would seal their fate
In just a little while.
One hour was all the jury took

PAUSE

We'd know in just a while.

CHORUS:
Charles English.

CHORUS:
Thomas Conlin

CHORUS:
Edward Walsh

CHORUS:
William Begley

CHORUS:
Jacob Baragar

CHORUS:
Baltis Baragar

CHORUS:
John W. Keeler

CHORUS:
John Hawkins

CHORUS:
John Clark

CHORUS:
Robert Clark

CHORUS:
Sidney Baragar

CHORUS:
Francis Brenton.

DRAPER:
Gentlemen of the jury. What is your verdict?

CHORUS:
Guilty. With a recommendation of mercy.

DRAPER:
Richard Aylward and Mary Aylward, do you have anything to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced against you?

SILENCE

Richard Aylward and Mary Aylward, you have been tried today by a jury of your country. They have found you guilty of the crime for which you were indicted. The jury have accompanied their verdict with a recommendation of mercy. 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 which you denied to a fellow being. Do not, I implore you, waste precious time in worldly matters but turn your hearts to your God that He by the mercies of His Beloved Son may deign to grant His pardon to even such criminals as you are. The sentence of the court is that you Richard Aylward and you Mary Aylward be taken from hence to the place from whence you came, and on the eighth day of December you be taken thence to the place of execution, and be there hanged by the neck until you be dead. And my God have mercy on your souls.

RICHARD:
You may hang away. I am not guilty.

MARY:
Yes, they may hang away, we are innocent.

SCENE 12, BELLEVILLE, DECEMBER 1862

LIGHTS DOWN ON COURT AND UP ON VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS AS THEY REPRESENT THE APPEAL PROCESS TO THE

GOVERNOR GENERAL. THE SPEECHES AS THEY PROGRESS CAN BEGIN TO OVERLAP AND QUICKEN IN PACE. THE AIDE TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL SITS ATOP THE PLATFORM.

CHORUS 1:

To His Excellency, Charles Stanley, Viscount Monck, Governor General of British North America, and Captain General and Commander-in-Chief of the Provinces of Canada, New Brunswick and the Island of Prince Edward . .

FINN:

John Finn, co-counsel for the defence. Enclosed you will please find a petition in the case *Queen Vs. Aylward* having been signed in the country. Will you lay it please before his Excellency the Governor General.

KENNEDY:

Your obedient servant, James Kennedy. I beg respectfully to present a petition to His Excellency in Council, praying that the sentence of death on the prisoners, Aylward, be commuted. It is signed by Gentlemen of the greatest intelligence and highest standing in this county.

READ:

The Honourable Robert Read, sir, and 39 others respectfully request you will be gracefully pleased to commute the sentence of death on the prisoners, insomuch as their lives, if taken, will not atone for that of Munro, while their little children will be left fatherless and motherless and friendless in a strange country and a strange land.

LAWLOR:

Your petitioners, Edmund B. Lawlor, R.C. Clergyman, and 150 others. . . pray that the sentence of death recorded against Richard and Mary Aylward, his wife, may be commuted for imprisonment in Penitentiary, or other such punishment as his Excellency may seem meet.

ALEX:

The undersigned widow and son of the late William Munro, who was killed by Mary Aylward in May last, most humbly and earnestly pray Your Excellency to exercise Royal prerogative in mercy on behalf of the convicts . . .

ELLIOT:

I, Robert Elliot and 70 others humbly plead that your Excellency may be graciously pleased to spare their lives and reduce the sentence to imprisonment to life, or to transportation to some distant land.

MOODY:

J. W. Dunbar Moodie, Sheriff County of Hastings. Dr. Hope, our gaol surgeon, and in conjunction with Mrs. Dafoe, the gaoler's wife, have just examined Mrs.

Aylward, and have come the conclusion she is not pregnant contrary to rumours circulating.

BRENNAN:

I believe the prisoners are not in a fit state to be executed on Monday next owing their minds are not spiritually prepared.

LEE:

The circumstances of this case have been fully considered by His Excellency in Council, together with the report of the Honourable Attorney General for Upper Canada adverse to the commutation of the sentence. His Excellency thought fit to order, and it is hereby ordered that the sentence of the law in the case of the said Richard Aylward and Mary Aylward be allowed to take its course. Signed William H. Lee. Clerk, Executive Council. Wednesday, December 3, 1886.

SCENE 13, BELLEVILLE, DECEMBER 8, 1862

LIGHTS DOWN. THEY REMAIN DOWN FOR LONGER THAN USUAL. A CALM SETTLES. LIGHTS RISE. MARY IS IN HER CELL. SHE IS AT PEACE WITH HER SELF.

MARY:

Dear God. I am going to die. Very shortly I will be in your loving arms. I can now come to you knowing my children are being taken care of and they will be in a good Christian home, in the church of their fathers. I believe Mr. Finn did all that was possible in our case, and I hope you Dear Lord will bless him, and all those who supported me and Richard. I forgive those in authority to whom our petitions were sent, and had the power to commute our sentence. All of them will someday appear before the tribunal of mercy. As I await my journey to you, My Lord, I am overcome by a sense of peace, like I have never felt before. The years of struggle, hunger, and hatred are over. I look forward now to the next stage of my journey.

“Our Father, who art in heaven. . .

THE FOLLOWING SPEECHES ALTERNATE. MARY IS IN HER CELL WITH REV. LAWLOR AND A WOMAN HELPER. SHE WILL BE DRESSED IN A FULL-LENGTH WHITE CREPE DRESS. REV. BRENNAN AT PULPIT; FINN AND CHRONICAL REPORTER AT SCENE OF HANGING.

BRENNAN:

My friends, God in his mercy has left it in our power, through the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, to offer up our prayers for the repose of the souls of the

faithful departed.

MARY:

Hallowed be thy name.

REPORT:

Monday morning the sun shone out brightly but it had scarcely risen above the horizon before it was obscured by the clouds, which hung heavily in the sky. At an early hour Rev. Mr. Brennan and Rev. Mr Lawlor visited the prisoners and remained with them until the hour of their execution arrived. The day before the Rev. Mr Brennan administer sacrament to both husband and wife.

MARY:

Thy Kingdom come.

BRENNAN:

No matter whether they died justly or unjustly, the Charity of God, and the love which the Saviour bears to man teaches us this important doctrine.

MARY:

Thy will be done,

REPORT:

By dawn, close to a thousand people, a moving tide of humanity, covered the courthouse square in front of the gallows.

BRENNAN:

There is no record in British law, or in British history where a man defending himself on his own soil has been condemned to death because his house is his castle.

MARY:

On earth as it is in heaven.

REPORT:

There were old men with whitened locks and bent forms, and infants nursing at their mothers' breasts, young men and maidens, boys and girls of all sizes and ages.

BRENNAN:

There is another extenuating circumstance in her favour. She did not repeat the blow. You see, my friends, how frivolous was the quarrel which led to this terrible result?

MARY:

Give us this day our daily bread.

REPORT:

We deplore the fights, wrestling matches, and public drunkenness among young men in the throng.

BRENNAN:

At their trial they were deprived of the source which would have acquitted them. For there was rebutting testimony which might have been obtained. But the length of the journey, the poverty of the people, and the inclemency of the weather prevented them from obtaining their testimony.

MARY:

And forgive us our trespasses.

REPORT:

The platform is about five feet by nine feet and has two trap doors, the fall being about four feet. The hooks are about three feet apart and from the beam to the platform the distance is about seven and a half feet.

BRENNAN:

I believe from the heroic end and the Christian manner in which they died that God will have mercy on their souls.

REPORT:

When the promised deadline of ten o'clock passed, there were cries of 'Get them out here', 'Hang them' and the like filling the air.

MARY:

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

BRENNAN:

I say it because they had but a few hours to prepare for death. Petitions were sent down to the government signed by the leading and most respected men of the county, and a favourable answer was anticipated.

BRENNAN:

But those petitions were unheeded.

MARY:

And lead us not into temptation.

REPORT:

The quarrelling, drunkenness, hooting and yelling combined to make it one of the most terrible and heart-rending scenes we ever witnessed.

BRENNAN:

And my friends, a petition was sent down to the Government to grant the poor creatures a respite of one solitary month to prepare them for death but that petition was denied.

MARY:

But deliver us from evil.

REPORT:

And we cannot but pause and ask what good effects arise from these disgusting public executions. Do they not rather pander to the vitiated taste of low morals, than act as warnings to others?

BRENNAN:

God grant themselves a merciful heaven.

MARY:

For thine is the kingdom.

REPORT:

At 11:25 A.M. the procession finally appeared, led by a couple of deputy sheriffs and bailiffs and a hooded hangman, followed by Mary Aylward with deathly pallor on her countenance and a trembling Richard Aylward.

MARY:

The power and the glory

ON THE SCAFFOLD, THE AYLWARDS FALL TO THEIR KNEES TO PRAY WITH REV. FATHER BRENNAN AND FATHER LAWLOR IN SILENCE. AFTER A MOMENT THE HANGMAN LIFTS THEM TO THEIR FEET, AND HOOKS ON THEIR NOOSES AND COVERS THEIR HEADS WITH NEWLY-MADE HOODS.

REPORT:

The priest looked to Mr. Aylward for any final words. The young man was too distraught in emotion, too broken in spirit to speak.

MARY:

For ever and ever.

BRENNAN:

I beg you to seek God's mercy on the Aylwards' souls.

REPORT:

At the hour fixed by the Sheriff for the execution, there could not be less than five to six thousand people on the ground--some estimate the number present at from eight to nine thousand. They were there to see the Aylwards hang.

MARY:
Amen.

LIGHTS OFF SUDDENLY. THE LIGHTS REMAIN OFF FOR THE REPORTER'S
SPEECH.

REPORT:

As the Rev. Mr. Brennan stepped back, he collapsed in a faint and was carried unconscious from the scaffold. The hangman jerked back the bolt that held the two trap doors under the Aylwards, and the two bodies fell into the void. Mary's frail body contorted like a grotesque puppet on tangled strings for a minute and a half until life deserted her. Richard continued to struggle for a further minute before he too found final peace. The bodies were left hanging for twenty-five minutes for the satisfaction and pleasure of those who came to witness their death.

MARY:

Mary O'Brien was my name
Ardpatrick it was my station.
Ardpatrick was my birthplace.
In Heaven I expect salvation.

Mary Aylward is my name
Belleville gaol is my station.
And on the trap I lose my life.
In Heaven I expect salvation.

CURTAIN