

A Victorian Abortionist on Trial: “Old Doc Andrews” in Toronto

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Ransom J. Andrews, a career abortionist in Toronto, stood trial for procuring an abortion in 1885 and nine years later was tried for murder because the Crown alleged he had caused the death of a young woman by performing an abortion on her. The two cases provide a window on the usually hidden social history of abortion in Victorian Canada. Toronto newspapers sensationalized the cases, shaping narratives and interesting readers by depicting the cases as melodramas with such stock characters as the evil abortionist, conniving seducer, and vulnerable single woman. Press coverage of the cases was potentially disastrous not only for Doc Andrews, who faced serious jail time or execution, but also for the women and their families, who saw intimate sexual matters splashed across the front pages of city dailies.

Ransom J. Andrews, avorteur de carrière à Toronto, a subi un procès pour avoir procuré un avortement à une femme en 1885. Neuf ans plus tard, il a été poursuivi pour meurtre, la Couronne ayant allégué qu'il avait causé la mort d'une jeune femme en pratiquant un avortement sur elle. Ces deux affaires ouvrent une fenêtre sur l'histoire sociale de l'avortement au Canada à l'époque victorienne, qui est habituellement dissimulée. Les journaux de Toronto ont eu recours au sensationnalisme, façonnant des récits et intéressant les lecteurs en décrivant les cas comme des mélodrames mettant en scène des personnages de base tels que le méchant avorteur, le séducteur sournois et la femme célibataire vulnérable. La couverture médiatique de ces affaires était potentiellement désastreuse non seulement pour le Doc Andrews, qui risquait une grave peine de prison ou l'exécution, mais aussi pour les femmes et leurs familles, qui ont vu des questions sexuelles intimes étalées à la une des quotidiens de la ville.

IN AN ERA when the Canadian state outlawed abortions, they took place clandestinely, leaving little or no evidence for historians to pursue. In exceptional instances, the police, the courts, and the press intervened in abortion cases, creating a comparative abundance of evidence. Two trials of Victorian Toronto's best-known abortionist, Ransom J. Andrews—an unlicensed practitioner popularly known by

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the genial moniker “Old Doc Andrews”—uncover public attitudes toward abortion, the courts’ handling of abortion matters, and the newspapers’ depictions of them. In November 1885, the septuagenarian Andrews stood trial for procuring an abortion after Jennie Leslie, age 16 and single, miscarried at his Toronto clinic. In 1894, Doc Andrews was indicted and tried for murder because the Crown alleged that he had procured the abortion of Lucy Denning, age 20 and single, who died as a result. Both cases reveal the plight of unmarried women who turned to abortionists to conceal the shame and avoid other consequences of being pregnant out of wedlock. In these two cases, young, single women in crisis sought control over their bodies and turned to female networks that led them to Doc Andrews. The sources for these cases depict Andrews’s clinics and something of his methods. State players also come into focus through these sources, which detail how it was that police came to intervene in the cases and how Crown attorneys chose to present their arguments against Andrews. Best revealed, however, is how newspapers covered the cases.

The press coverage, which sensationalized the cases by shaping narratives and deploying stereotypes to interest readers, had consequences for both the abortionist and his patients. As Karen Dubinsky has observed, when covering cases involving sexual matters, most newspapers “gave ample space to the crime, the investigation, and the trial and did not hesitate to create heroes and villains in the process.”¹ When police laid charges against Doc Andrews in 1885, the press condemned him as guilty of a heinous crime, dropped the genial moniker, and called him a dangerous, old reprobate; the portrayal reappeared at the time of his 1894 trial for murder. Press coverage of the cases was potentially disastrous not only for Doc Andrews, who faced serious jail time or execution, but also for the women and their families, who saw intimate sexual matters splashed across the front pages of city dailies.

In 1841, the province that became Ontario got its first abortion law, which made it a felony to procure an abortion by either administering poison “or other noxious thing” or by the use of any instrument.² After Confederation in 1867, when the criminal law fell within the Canadian government’s jurisdiction, abortion remained an indictable offence.³ All abortions were illegal, even when pregnancy meant death to a woman carrying a fetus. Anyone convicted of procuring an abortion, including women who performed abortions on themselves, could be sentenced to two years to life in prison. Individuals who supplied drugs or instruments knowingly used for abortions were guilty of a misdemeanour and subject to penalties up to two years. When a woman died from an abortion, the procurers of her abortion, if identified by police, faced murder charges, and if convicted, the death penalty was mandatory.⁴ These laws did not eliminate abortions; they drove them underground.

1 Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880–1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 93.

2 An Act for Consolidating and Amending the Statutes in this Province Relative to Offences Against the Person, 1841, 4 & 5 Vict., c. 27 (Province of Canada).

3 An Act Respecting Offences Against the Person, 1869, 32 & 33 Vict., c. 20, s. 59 (Canada).

4 On the history of abortion law in Canada, see Constance Backhouse, “Involuntary Motherhood: Abortion, Birth Control and the Law in Nineteenth Century Canada,” *Windsor Year Book of Access to Justice*, vol. 3 (1983), pp. 61–130.

Just how safe abortions were in Victorian Ontario is uncertain. In their publications, Canadian physicians emphasized the dangers of the procedure, and there certainly were hazards.⁵ In 1880, however, one licensed Ontario physician maintained that physicians could safely perform abortions, and he provided instructions for doing so in the *Canada Lancet*, the mainstream physicians’ journal.⁶ Experienced abortionists expected their patients to survive, although they also knew there was a risk that the woman could suffer a health crisis or die. (Of course, pregnancy and childbirth were risky, too.) When the judge in Andrews’s 1894 trial declared that abortion was an atrocious crime liable to cause death, he was reflecting respectable opinion—the moralizing expressed in public by clergy, licensed physicians, judges, newspaper editors, and the like.⁷

Because most abortions were clandestine procedures beyond the purview of the law and the press, it is difficult to know how common they were. At a meeting of the Medical Council of Ontario in 1868, Dr. Joseph Workman, a prominent physician and superintendent of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum in Toronto, emphasized the extent of the problem of abortion by saying that “he had it on authority that within the last twelve months there had been 1,000 cases of provoked abortion in Toronto,” an estimate the *Globe* thought exaggerated.⁸ (Workman made a point of saying “provoked abortion” because “abortion” and “miscarriage” were used interchangeably at the time.) In 1873, Dr. Archibald Riddell, a Toronto coroner, said that every week he had applications to procure abortion and that he had had “as many as four in one day.”⁹ His claim is impossible to verify.

In contrast to the sparse historical literature focusing on women’s abortion experiences in Victorian Ontario, historians have effectively studied the legal history of abortion.¹⁰ They have also documented the anti-abortion rhetoric of the mainstream medical profession, which aimed both to increase the power of male doctors over women and to suppress the competition from midwives and abortionists in the provision of medical services.¹¹ Physicians invoked morality, science, religion, and the law in their attempt to eliminate abortion providers. The physicians’ campaign recognized that abortions were sought both by single women, who feared condemnation for giving birth out of wedlock, and by married women,

5 Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 140.

6 “Treatment of Abortion,” *Canada Lancet*, vol. 13, no. 4 (December 1880), p. 118.

7 Justice John Edward Rose quoted in *News*, December 11, 1885.

8 *Globe*, November 13, 1869, and June 15, 1868. The *Globe* thought Workman’s estimate of 1,000 abortions excessive. See June 27, 1868.

9 *Globe*, October 3, 1873.

10 Backhouse, “Involuntary Motherhood,” pp. 88–91; Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991), pp. 140–166; Shelley A. M. Gavigan, “On ‘Bringing on the Menses’: The Criminal Liability of Women and the Therapeutic Exception in Canadian Abortion Law,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1986), pp. 279–312.

11 Angus McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion in Canada, 1870–1920,” *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 59, no. 3 (September 1978), pp. 319–340. See also Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880–1980* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); Mitchinson, *Nature of Their Bodies*, pp. 127–142; Tracy Penny Light, “Shifting Interests: The Medical Discourse on Abortion in English Canada” (PhD dissertation, University of Waterloo, 2003), pp. 18–56.

who wanted to limit the number of their pregnancies, to have smaller families, and to hide unwanted consequences of extramarital affairs. In the late nineteenth century, American physicians raised fears about married women's abortions and the dreadful consequences for the nation and White race of the declining birth rate among American-born, White, middle-class women at a time of mass immigration of Europeans who were having large families.¹² In the early twentieth century, English Canadian physicians adopted similar rhetoric in relation to the collapsing birth rate in English Canada and the robust birth rate among French Canadians.¹³ According to this logic, by restricting women's control of their fertility, both race and nation became stronger.

From its founding in 1868, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, a self-governing body under the Ontario Medical Act, maintained a register of licensed practitioners in the province. The register listed the name of the doctor, where the practice was located, and the individual's qualifications—generally a medical degree or, for some, certification by the Eclectic Medical Board.¹⁴ Until 1880, when feminist physician Emily Stowe at last was included on the register, only male practitioners were on the register. During the second half of the nineteenth century, practitioners divided between the “eclectics” (many of them homeopaths) and the “regulars.” The latter campaigned—eventually with success—to gain a monopoly of medical services and edge out midwives and eclectics.¹⁵ In their campaign to rally the public and politicians to their cause, they found it strategic to deploy the derogatory term “quacks” when attacking unlicensed practitioners who performed abortions.¹⁶ The organized medical profession also condemned the criminal practice of abortion by their own members. When courts convicted licensed physicians for performing abortions, the College struck them from the register, as it did with all felons.

In the literature on abortion in Victorian Ontario, historians have used the single case study to reveal various aspects of social history. Constance Backhouse has studied the 1879 prosecution for attempting to procure an abortion of Dr. Emily Howard Stowe, the feminist champion of women's right to practise medicine and of woman suffrage.¹⁷ The Crown alleged that Sarah Ann Lovell died while being treated by the unlicensed Stowe, who had prescribed a tiny dose of an abortifacient. It appears likely that, given the slim evidence against her, Stowe would not have been prosecuted had she not been a woman challenging male physicians' monopoly on medical services. Rebecca Beausaert has explored the racism revealed in the case of Letitia Munson, a Black midwife and healer, prosecuted in 1882 for procuring an

12 James C. Mohr, *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

13 McLaren, “Birth Control and Abortion,” p. 321.

14 The Ontario Medical Act, 1877, 37 Vic., c. 30; *The Ontario Medical Register, 1870–* (Toronto: Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, 1870–).

15 Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, pp. 141–143; R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, “The Origins of Organized Medicine in Ontario 1856–1869,” in Charles G. Rolland, ed., *Health, Disease, and Medicine: Essays in Canadian History* (Toronto: Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine, 1984), pp. 64–95.

16 Ian Radforth, *Jeannie's Demise: Abortion on Trial in Victorian Toronto* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2020), pp. 158–159.

17 Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, pp. 140–166.

abortion on Ellen Weigarten, a White woman who died near Woodstock, Ontario.¹⁸ Although the assize court in Woodstock found Munson not guilty, the press vilified her as an elderly, Black abortioneer who preyed on unsuspecting White folks. My own book, *Jeannie’s Demise: Abortion on Trial in Victorian Toronto*, focuses on the 1875 prosecution of abortioneers Arthur and Alice Davis for the murder of Jeannie Gilmour, a young, single woman who died following an abortion. The case exposes the hypocrisy of “Toronto the Good,” where public opinion condemned abortions and the law prohibited them, but abortioneers were usually permitted to operate unimpeded.¹⁹

In *Jeannie’s Demise*, to provide a context for the abortion case of Jeannie Gilmour, I have examined 16 Ontario cases in the period 1868–1908 where an alleged abortioneer was accused of murder because the woman died.²⁰ All the principals were White and nearly all from the province’s Protestant majority. The evidence shows there was no typical abortioneer. Twelve were men; four were women. Six were licensed physicians; ten were not. Ten were abortion providers of long experience; six probably procured only one or two abortions. Similarly, the women who sought abortions and died were a varied lot. Fourteen were young and single; two were married. Eleven were city dwellers; five lived in rural places. The locations where the procedures took place included farmhouses, doctors’ offices, clinics, and the backrooms of drug stores. Similarly, legal authorities exercised wide discretion in handling abortion/murder cases. In the four cases where the male abortioneer clearly had a female assisting partner, twice she was tried and twice not. In three cases, authorities did not pursue murder charges, and the accused stood trial only for the lesser charge of procuring an abortion.

Context for Ransom Andrews’s trials may also be found in Tracy Penny’s study of 108 Ontario cases where charges were laid in connection with an abortion during the period 1880–1929. In 34 (32%) of the cases, the woman survived the procedure and testified against her abortioneer in court. Of the 58 women who had abortions, 57% of them died from their procedures. In the 1880s, when authorities laid 13 charges against abortion providers, the courts found four guilty and three not guilty; evidence was deemed too slim to proceed to trial in six cases. In the 1890s, when there were 28 charges, six had guilty verdicts, 18 not-guilty ones, and four were dismissed for lack of sufficient evidence. Penny found working-class women overrepresented in the case files and argued that middle-class women were better able to keep their sexual matters private.²¹

18 Rebecca Beausaert, “Not Guilty but Guilty: Race, Rumour and Respectability in the 1882 Abortion Trial of Letitia Munson,” in Shannon Settner, Kristin Burnett, and Travis Hay, eds., *Abortion: History, Politics, and Reproductive Justice after Morgentaler* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), pp. 55–73.

19 Radforth, *Jeannie’s Demise*. See also a Quebec study, Elaine Kalman Naves, *Portrait of a Scandal: The Abortion Trial of Robert Notman* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2018).

20 Radforth, *Jeannie’s Demise*, pp. 54–67, discusses 15 cases; the remainder of the book discusses a 16th case. The cases were found in the Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Criminal Indictment Files (hereafter CIF), RG 22–392, and in newspapers.

21 Tracy Penny, “‘Getting Rid of My Trouble’: A Social History of Abortion in Ontario, 1880–1929” (master’s thesis, Laurentian University, 1995), pp. 31–33, 44, 98, 109, 121. The collection of 108 cases derives from Penny’s search of the Criminal Indictment Files in the Archives of Ontario, Ontario Provincial Police records, and cases in the law reports.

Evidence for the Andrews cases comes mainly from the Toronto press, supplemented by some legal sources. In 1885 and 1893–1894, city newspapers closely covered the Andrews cases. Toronto, a rapidly industrializing city, which grew from a population of 96,000 in 1881 to 181,000 in 1891, supported a lively press.²² The *Globe*, the *News*, and the *World* provided information and commentary on the arrests and court appearances in the 1885 Andrews case. Nine years later, those same newspapers, as well as the *Telegram*, lavished attention on the Andrews murder case. In tune with the popular journalism of the 1880s and 1890s, particularly the *News*, the *World*, and the *Telegram* sought to increase circulation, and hence advertising revenues, by sensationalizing local news.²³ They titillated readers with coverage of cases of sex crimes and criminal prosecutions of abortions, which exposed details of sexual lives. Their stories, which elaborated on the bare facts of sad situations, were part of a thriving popular literature that emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. Writing of that period, literary scholar David S. Reynolds shows how “the rise of the brash, garish penny papers . . . brought a new hyperbolic emotionalism and rather amoral exploitation of the tragic or perverse.”²⁴ Typically, sensational writings about criminal trials condemned immorality but lingered on the details of sexual crimes, including abortion, rape, seduction, and incest. Journalists writing about the trials of Old Doc Andrews followed in this tradition. Trial transcripts unfortunately do not survive for these cases, though there are records of the Ontario Department of Justice for these cases, particularly the criminal indictment files. Prepared by Crown authorities, these files contain various official documents and sworn statements of witnesses.²⁵ The records of the Toronto Jail provide some biographical information.²⁶

Old Doc Andrews

For all the attention the press gave Doc Andrews at the time of the two cases, the details of Ransom Andrews’s biography are sketchy.²⁷ He once testified that he

22 *Census of Canada, 1890-91*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1893), p. 370. Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Minko Sotiron, *From Politics to Profits: The Commercialization of Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1890–1920* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

23 P. F. W. Rutherford, “The People’s Press: The Emergence of the New Journalism in Canada, 1866-99,” *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 2 (June 1975), pp. 169–191, <https://doi.org/10.3138/CHR-056-02-03>. On p. 187, circulation statistics are given for 1892: *Globe*, 26,950; *Telegram*, 21,695; *News*, 19,750; *World*, 11,500.

24 David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also David B. Sachsman and David W. Bulla, *Sensationalism: Murder, Mayhem, Scandals and Disasters in 19th Century Reporting* (New York: Routledge 2013). For a study of the popular writings about a young Canadian woman who in 1850 died from an abortion in Maine, see Elizabeth A. De Wolfe, *The Murder of Mary Bean and Other Stories* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2007).

25 AO, CIF, RG 22-395-0-8098, MS 8550, York County, 1885, Andrews, Ransom J.; RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al.

26 AO, RG 20-100-1, Toronto Jail Register, MS 3645, December 11, 1885, and MS 3648, November 3, 7, 1893.

27 To add to uncertainties about his life, Ransom J. Andrews often used the name R. Irwin Andrews, possibly to escape the reach of the law. Research using Ancestry.com has failed to discover Andrews (under either name or similar names) in censuses, birth, marriage, military, or death records.

was born in the United States in 1810 and that he had earned a certificate for his medical training in a New York hospital. He told the court that during the Irish Famine migration he had worked at a quarantine station in 1847 but had contracted “ship’s fever” (typhus) and had had to stop.²⁸ Andrews advertised that he began his specialized medical practice in 1858. It first appears in the directory for Hamilton, Ontario, in 1863. A newspaper report from Hamilton said that “Doc” Andrews, who practised in the city for ten years, used to sell patent medicines to farmers at his stall in the market. People remembered him for going about town dressed in a crimson dressing gown embroidered with his slogan the “Good Samaritan.”²⁹

Toronto directories first show Andrews with a clinic in 1866 near the centre of town at the corner of Adelaide and Bay streets. Andrews’s name appears in the 1876 directory for Buffalo, New York, as a druggist with premises on Clinton Street. Back in Toronto, he moved a few times, including to 37–39 Colborne Street and later to 25–27 Gould Street, both locations being in the city centre and, in contradiction to the popular stereotype, not at all backstreet dens.³⁰ A true entrepreneur, Andrews also ran a livery business with stables at 161 Queen Street West. Andrews was not licensed to practise medicine in Ontario (or anywhere else) and was prosecuted in the province and fined for representing himself as a qualified physician, although that did not deter him from continuing to do so.³¹ In the city directories, his name appears as “Ransom J. Andrews, M.D.” From the 1860s to the 1890s, Andrews was a well-known abortion provider and dispenser of advice and medicines to men regarding impotency and to women regarding irregular menstruation. His clientele came from across southern Ontario and places in western New York State.

Glimpses into Andrews’s life come from brushes he had with the law. In January 1869, he was arrested at Holland Landing, Ontario, for allegedly performing an abortion on Rachel Hill in nearby Queensville. Although subpoenaed to appear at Andrews’s trial, Hill did not show. The press said she had been “made away with” and was staying in Chicago.³² The implication was that Andrews had helped her to abscond and had thus avoided a conviction.

28 *Globe*, May 11, 1894. The Toronto Jail Register gives his age as 72 in 1885 and 83 in 1893. OA, Toronto Jail Register, RG 20-100-1, MS 3645, December 11, 1885, and MS 3648, November 7, 1893.

29 *Globe*, November 11, 1893.

30 *Hutcheson’s Hamilton City Directory for 1862–1863* (Hamilton: John Eastwood, 1862); p. 178 *Mitchell and Co.’s General Directory for the City of Toronto for 1866* (Toronto: Mitchell & Co., 1866), p. 123; The *News* had him practising at 37 Colborne Street (January 7, 1869), as did *Robertson and Cook’s Toronto City Directory for 1870* (Toronto: Daily Telegraph 1879), p. 3; *Buffalo, New York, City Directory for 1876*, p. 704. He first appears at 25 Gould Street in the *Toronto Directory for 1879* (Toronto: Might & Taylor, 1879), p. 98.

31 Testimony of Dr. Robert Pyne, registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, *Toronto News*, May 10, 1894.

32 *News*, January 7, 9, and 19, 1869.



Figure 1. Sketch of Ransom Andrews.

Source: *Toronto News*, November 3, 1893.

In August 1873, police arrested Andrews for having performed an abortion on a Toronto woman, Rebecca Ellis, age 21. While convalescing at home, her condition had become so grave that her sister called in Dr. Niven Agnew, who refused to treat her unless she told how she had become ill.³³ That was a common response of physicians called in when a woman's health deteriorated following an abortion. By getting the woman to admit to where she had gone for her abortion, the doctor would seek to establish that he was not the abortionist and thus avoid prosecution. By taking the revelation to police, moreover, physicians could help suppress the abortion trade. Agnew succeeded in getting Rebecca Ellis to name Andrews, and after Agnew went to the police, a detective arrested Andrews for procuring an abortion. The press reported that Old Doc Andrews passionately insisted to the arresting detective that he was innocent. The detective took the unusual step of bringing him to the home of Magistrate John Baxter, a justice of the peace who then and there committed Andrews to trial and freed him on bail of only \$500, a meagre amount for him and one that outraged the *Globe*.³⁴ Predictably, Andrews jumped bail and failed to appear at his trial. Authorities issued an arrest warrant, but he absconded. Word had it that he had probably gone to Buffalo, New York.³⁵ Andrews's premises on Colborne Street were then taken over by another experienced abortionist, "Dr." Arthur Davis, an unlicensed physician who re-established his Toronto practice after escaping bail in an abortion case in Rochester, New York.³⁶

33 AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-7104, MS 8534, York County, 1873, Andrews, Ransom J., "Statement of Dr. Niven Agnew of Toronto," no date.

34 *Globe*, editorial, "Failure of Justice," August 28, 1873. It is possible that Andrews bribed the detective to take him to the magistrate rather than to the Police Court.

35 *Globe*, August 19 and 21 and October 13, 1873.

36 See Radforth, *Jeannie's Demise*, pp. 26–27.

At the time of the 1885 trial, the *News* reported that in 1878, Buffalo’s medical officer had gone with police to Andrews’s premises because several abortions were taking place there, but he had fled by hack to Black Rock and then by rowboat across the Niagara River to Ontario. None of the women had died, and so extradition on a murder charge was not possible.³⁷

Although the abortionist’s surgery was a private space, Andrews’s business had a public face. He advertised his “private medical dispensary,” where “Both Sexes can obtain Remedies unlimitedly successful in the cure of all diseases of a private nature.” His advertisement appeared in as respectable a place as *Might’s 1892 Toronto City Directory*. Andrews, assuming his avuncular moniker, advertised “Old Dr. Andrews’ Female Pills” and said they were “infallible in correcting irregularities [and] removing obstructions from any cause whatever.” This language was typical of abortionists’ advertisements because, while conveying the nature of their trade, the wording was sufficiently vague to prevent authorities from charging them with breaking a law. Similar advertisements were both widely disseminated and roundly criticized by mainstream physicians.³⁸ There were repeated calls from physicians and members of parliament for a law that would suppress such advertisements, but when enacted, the new law proved difficult to enforce.³⁹

PRIVATE * MEDICAL * DISPENSARY,
NO. 38 GERRARD STREET WEST.

 * ESTABLISHED IN 1858. *

**Both Sexes can obtain Remedies unlimitedly successful in the
 cure of all diseases of a private nature and
 chronic complaints.**

To Mothers, Wives and Daughters.



OLD DR. ANDREWS' FEMALE PILLS.—The effect of certain medicines having been clearly ascertained, females are surely relieved from the distressing complaints, the specifics for those being infallible in correcting irregularities, removing obstructions from any cause whatever, and the only safe, sure and certain remedy for all those distressing complaints so peculiar to the female sex. They are, however, nothing new, having been dispensed from his office for 45 years, and are not an experiment. Explicit directions, stating when they should not be used, with each box. Pills sent to any address on receipt of one dollar. All letters answered promptly without charge when stamp is enclosed. Communications confidential. **Mrs. Moon's Little Blue Book** for ladies only. Contains useful information to every female, single or married. Sent by mail in sealed envelope on receipt of thirty cents in stamps.

Address

R. I. ANDREWS, M. S.,
38 Gerrard Street West, TORONTO. ONT.

Figure 2. An Advertisement for the medical services of Doc Andrews.
 Source: *Toronto City Directory for 1892* (Toronto: Might Directories, 1892), p. 505.

³⁷ *News*, November 6, 1885.

³⁸ Mitchinson, *Nature of Their Bodies*, pp. 131–132.

³⁹ Criminal Code, 1892, 55 & 56 Vict., c. 29, s. 179 (c) (Canada). In a 1901 Toronto trial, *King vs. Karn*, the prosecution failed to convict the advertiser of abortifacients; see Backhouse, “Involuntary Motherhood,” pp. 124–125.

The Jennie Leslie Case

In November 1885, when Jennie Leslie came to Toronto for an abortion at Andrews's clinic, a *News* reporter described her as "a rather good looking girl, not yet 17 years of age, with light brown hair and blue eyes." Leslie was single and lived with her parents in Whitby, Ontario, less than 40 miles east of Toronto. Her father, John Leslie, kept a hotel in Whitby and owned a Toronto shoe store. About two years before, Jennie Leslie met her clean-shaven boyfriend, an Uxbridge barber by the name of James Worfolk, age 22. During the summer of 1885, when she became aware that she was pregnant, her family physician, Dr. Bogart of Whitby, confirmed it.⁴⁰

The press represented James Worfolk variously as Leslie's blameworthy seducer and as a young, single man who showed concern for her predicament and was prepared to marry her. No doubt Worfolk wanted to present himself publicly in a positive way. In fact, evidence from the 1891 Census of Canada indicates that in 1885 James Worfolk was likely married to another woman, and they had a three-year-old daughter. He was legally unable to marry Leslie.

Distressed about the shame that would come from a birth out of wedlock, Leslie turned to a woman friend, confiding in James's elder sister, Mary Worfolk. Mary may have felt some responsibility knowing her brother had impregnated Leslie and gave her a bottle of drugs and mentioned other medicines she might try to end her pregnancy. They did not work, which was frequently the case with such remedies. Mary recommended that Leslie go to see Dr. Ransom J. Andrews, the well-known city abortionist. On Tuesday, November 24, James Worfolk accompanied Leslie to Toronto and up to the door of Andrews's establishment at 25–27 Gould Street, where he left her.⁴¹

Andrews's place on Gould Street was a proper clinic. He had had two semi-detached, roughcast houses connected and fitted up as a home and surgery. The several bedrooms for patients were well furnished and had heavy curtains to exclude the light. Andrews had one of the newfangled telephones installed in the house. The household included Harriet Armstrong, the housekeeper, age 30, and two younger female servants, Harriet Roberts and Minnie Taylor.⁴² Male abortionists nearly always hired female assistants to nurse patients and maintain the house.

Jennie Leslie explained what happened next in a statement sworn before a magistrate.⁴³ It was the version of events relied on by the Crown. When Leslie arrived at Andrews's clinic, a woman showed her into the sitting room where "Dr. Andrews" explained that an abortion would cost \$50. Probably because Leslie showed alarm at such a large amount, Andrews told her, "It was not much for

40 The newspapers did not provide a first name for Dr. Bogart. The 1881 census shows a Dr. Irvine D. Bogart living in Campbellford, Ontario. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), 1881 Census of Canada on-line, item no. 3274802, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1881/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3274802>.

41 *News*, December 11, 1885.

42 AO, Toronto Jail Register, RG 20-100-1, MS 3645, November 11, 1885, records that Armstrong was single and Canadian-born, and Roberts was single, 21, and born in England.

43 AO, CIF, RG 22-395-0-8098, MS 8550, York County, 1885, Andrews, Ransom J., "Statement of Jennie Leslie," December 17, 1885, pp. 2–8. Her similar testimony at the police court is reported in *News*, December 18, 1885.

such a risky job." Nevertheless, it was an enormous price for most single women, although in line with the prices charged by the better-known abortioneer. Leslie paid Andrews all she had—\$44—and promised the rest soon. (The source of her funds is unknown.) Andrews explained to Leslie that she would be staying for a while. (In that era, there was typically a gap of about two days between the procedure and the miscarriage, and then a period of convalescence.) One other patient was staying at the house, Maggie Scott, age 17, from Cataraqui near Kingston—a single woman sharing Leslie's predicament. Harriet Armstrong showed Leslie to a bedroom, where she spent the night.

First thing the next morning, James Norfolk visited the house and gave Leslie the six dollars she owed Andrews. After breakfast, "Doc" Andrews performed an operation on her in a private room downstairs, and throughout that week, he operated several more times. For at least some of these procedures, he not only probed her uterus with an instrument but also injected cold water while Leslie stood standing. On December 7, Andrews remarked that she "was pretty hard to 'fetch on,'" and he gave her what turned out to be her last procedure. That afternoon, she felt sick and took to her bed, where Andrews told her to stay. The next afternoon Mary Norfolk visited and, seeing Leslie was quite ill, had the doctor come into the room to see her. He stayed with her until she miscarried that same afternoon. He removed the fetus and told her she was all right and to lie quietly.

On December 10, Leslie was still recuperating at the clinic when "Doc" Andrews suddenly called upstairs to her, saying someone had informed him by telephone that the detectives were after her. (In looking for him, they had first gone to his livery business on Queen Street from which his staff telephoned the warning.) Leslie hurriedly dressed, donned a heavy veil, and went outside. Shortly afterward, despite her disguise, she was nabbed by her father, John Leslie, and Detective Edward Brown of the Toronto Police Force, who was armed with a warrant for her arrest on a vagrancy charge. When Jennie's father met her, he wept openly. "The scene between the two was a painful one," commented the *News* reporter. "The old man being completely unmanned."⁴⁴ The reporter's use of the word "unmanned" refers to his display of emotion typical of women and perhaps suggests John Leslie's patriarchal power had taken a blow. His daughter had defied him by hiding her pregnancy from him, by acting independently and getting an abortion, and by bringing the family name into disrepute. Unsurprisingly given the Victorian context, newspapers offered no criticisms of the intervention of John Leslie perhaps because they believed he had only exercised his patriarchal authority and protected his daughter.

Police became involved in the case because John Leslie had requested officers take action to retrieve his missing daughter. She had been missing from home for two weeks, and he had finally learned that she had gone to Andrews's clinic. When requested by John Leslie to assist in fetching his daughter, the police readily complied, the patriarchal state stepping up to support the man. Outside the clinic, John Leslie told police that his daughter had just confessed that Andrews had

44 *News*, December 11, 1885.

induced a miscarriage the day before. At this point, detectives saw Andrews running down the street and, catching up to him, promptly arrested him. They chose not to arrest Jennie Leslie for procuring her own abortion, which they could have done, but instead charged her with vagrancy and allowed her to go free in the charge of her father. Also arrested on the abortion charge were Harriet Armstrong and Harriet Roberts, whom police had found at the clinic. The next day, police arrested James Worfolk in Uxbridge. By bringing in the police, John Leslie had triggered the journalists, and later the courts, to disclose Jennie Leslie's intimate, sexual situation, thus bringing on her public shaming. One wonders whether other fathers later recalled the case and hesitated to involve the police when a daughter sought an abortion.

The *World* reported that Andrews had again found himself "in the clutches of the law, after many narrow escapes from imprisonment." The story conformed to the conventions of melodrama, a then well-known genre of popular literature and theatre that reinforced stereotypes of evil abortionists, scheming seducers, and downtrodden young women. "A young girl brought to the verge of death by the wicked work of an alleged physician in an endeavour to conceal the shame occasioned by the wiles of her seducer is a painful reflection on our society," observed the *World*.⁴⁵

The curious public got its first view of the prisoner Andrews outside the Toronto Police Court on December 11. Andrews used his advanced years—he said he was 73—to try to win public sympathy. The *World* reporter did not play along, commenting that he was "either sick or feigns sickness." Andrews told reporters that if he was kept in jail for long, the authorities would have to dispose of a corpse.⁴⁶

At the Toronto Police Court, the police magistrate, Col. George T. Denison, ruled that Andrews would have to stand trial at the winter assizes. (Every winter, spring, and fall, the assize court heard York County's serious criminal and civil cases in Toronto at the York County Courthouse on Adelaide Street East.) Andrews successfully applied for bail, putting up \$2,000 himself and \$1,000 from each of two friends. His ability to raise substantial bail indicates not only that Andrews had significant financial resources from his abortion practice but also that he was no pariah and had supportive friends on whom he could rely in a crisis. When Andrews walked out of the jail with his lawyer, a detective charged Andrews with performing an operation on Maggie Scott, the other patient found at the clinic. Police immediately reincarcerated him in the Toronto Jail, where he was to remain for six months.⁴⁷ No doubt irked by Andrews's previous evasions of the law, police showed determination to ensure that this time the wily Andrews did not escape their clutches.

45 *World*, December 11, 1885. On Victorian melodrama, see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Christina Burr, *Spreading the Light: Work and Labour Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 23–28.

46 *World*, December 11, 1885; *Toronto Globe*, December 12, 1885.

47 *Globe*, January 5, 1886. At Andrews's arraignment for the abortion of Maggie Scott, she denied he had given her one and the Crown dropped the case. *Montréal Gazette*, January 20, 1886. That same day, Roberts was released and Armstrong made bail. The Crown later dropped Armstrong's case. AO, Toronto Jail Register, RG 20-100-1, MS 3645, December 11, 1885.

On January 29, 1886, at the York County winter assizes in Toronto, Andrews stood trial for procuring an abortion on Jennie Leslie. As was the case for most trials involving abortions, it drew many people eager for spicy stories and scandal who gathered outside the courthouse and pressed for admission. For this case, authorities chose to limit the spectators by only admitting lawyers, law students, and journalists. The public followed the trial only through press reports. Jennie Leslie at least avoided the ordeal of courtroom spectators showing a prurient interest in her situation.

At Andrews’s trial, Justice John Edward Rose presided. Defending Andrews was Britton Bath Osler, QC, widely acknowledged as the most eminent criminal lawyer then practising in Canada. Andrews’ abortion income put him in a position to pay for Osler’s costly services. The Crown attorney was Hugh MacMahon, QC, who had had a long and lucrative career in London, Ontario, before coming in 1880 to Toronto.⁴⁸ In the eyes of the *Globe* reporter, when Andrews entered the courtroom, he appeared quite indifferent to the business going on. It was a masculine pose, but it’s likely he had confidence in his high-priced lawyer. It was a jury trial, the jurors all being men as required by the law of the day. Their male presence reinforced the courtroom’s masculine dominance, where the judge and barristers were men too.

The Crown called as its first witness Jennie Leslie, now physically recovered.⁴⁹ It was often the case that the woman who had had the abortion testified for the Crown—if she survived her procedure.⁵⁰ Leslie calmly told her story as related above. Under cross-examination, Leslie testified that she had seen Dr. Bogart in Whitby twice after learning she was pregnant but these were examinations of her condition only. She explained that news reports that she had married James Warfolk were incorrect. Leslie said that she had not told her parents about her pregnancy because she had been afraid to do so. Her father testified about finding his daughter, and Detective John Cuddy described the arrest of the prisoner and the others at the clinic. Dr. James F. W. Ross of Toronto General Hospital testified that on December 11, he had examined Leslie and found that she had been pregnant and had delivered, but whether it was a natural delivery, he could not say. Another physician who had also examined her confirmed what Ross said. That concluded the Crown’s case.

The defence called Harriet Armstrong, Andrews’s housekeeper, who swore that in conversation Leslie told her that on two occasions a doctor in Whitby had operated on her. The last time, she became so ill that he would go no further but said that he would “see her through” if she came to Toronto. The phrasing hints that Bogart might have been a source of funds for Andrews’s services. Harriet Roberts and Minnie Taylor, who worked in Andrews’s house, testified about Leslie’s illness there. Finally, four physicians testified “as to the probable results of the operation as described by Miss Leslie.”

48 Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1899), pp. 786–787; 711–712.

49 The account of the trial derives from the account in the *Globe*, January 30, 1886. Other newspapers’ accounts are very similar.

50 Tracy Penny found that in 32% of the cases where authorities laid charges because of an abortion, the women survived and testified. Penny, “Getting Rid of My Trouble,” p. 108.

It was defence lawyer Osler's contention that Bogart had operated on Leslie twice, killing the fetus but leaving it inside her and causing her illness. Andrews had simply operated to remove the dead fetus, a legal procedure and one necessary for Jennie's health.

When that strategy became apparent to Crown attorney MacMahon, he called Bogart to the stand. Osler objected to Bogart's being called, arguing that his testimony should have been heard earlier when the Crown had had its turn. Justice Rose overruled the objection. The doctor denied ever having operated on Leslie. The Crown was attempting to show that Leslie's version of events was correct and that the evidence of defence witness Armstrong, who said Leslie told her Bogart had operated on her in Whitby, was untrue.

The jury was out for two hours, indicating that jurors had to overcome differences of opinion. They returned with a verdict of "Guilty." Clearly, they rejected Ransom Andrews's account. Defence attorney Osler tried to help his convicted client and earn his substantial fee by raising points of law on appeal in "a crown case reserved," that is, a case where only points of law could be contested. Andrews remained in jail until the appeal was heard in May. On the trial judge's failure to warn the jury about corroborative evidence, Chief Justice Matthew Crooks ruled that while it was a customary and better practice for a judge to warn the jury that it is not safe to convict in the absence of corroborative evidence of an accomplice (Leslie having been an accomplice to her own abortion), such a warning was not strictly necessary. Osler also took exception to Bogart having been called to testify so late in the trial, but the chief justice dismissed the concern. He sustained the conviction of Andrews.⁵¹ Andrews began his five-year sentence in Kingston Penitentiary.

The Lucy Denning Case

In 1890, Doc Andrews left prison and, unrepentant, he immediately resumed his Toronto practice.⁵² Now in his early eighties, Andrews married a much younger woman, Alice.⁵³ Andrews's stooping shoulders and white hair and whiskers set him in marked contrast to his young wife, who was described as being "rather comely and a decided brunette."⁵⁴ Alice, called a midwife by some, assisted him in his practice.⁵⁵ At the time of Lucy Denning's death, Andrews's clinic was located in his west-end home at 237 Shaw Street, a brick, two-and-a-half story with a back garden. A *Globe* reporter described the house as "commodious and lavishly

51 *Globe*, May 28 and June 7, 1886. Backhouse discussed the legal technicalities in "Involuntary Motherhood," pp. 89–90.

52 *Toronto City Directory for 1891* (Toronto: Might's Directory Co., 1891), p. 515. There was misinformation in the press that Andrews had gained early release, so the Department of Justice announced that he had served his full five years with the exception of what he earned by good conduct. *Globe*, November 9, 1893.

53 She may have been Alice C. Dodge. The 1920 US Census has an Alice C. Andrews, born in New York in 1870 and widowed, living in Buffalo with her mother, Helen Dodge, and brother, Albert Dodge. US Federal Census, 1920, Buffalo Ward 22, District 0210, Ancestry.com.

54 *Telegram*, November 4, 1893.

55 Coroner Dr. Johnson called Alice Andrews a midwife at the inquest (*World*, November 23, 1893), but Helen Lewis testified that she saw Andrews simply cleaning, serving food, and ironing. AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., "Statement of Helen Lewis." November 27, 1893.

furnished," a description possibly accurate but meant to imply that Andrews had grown rich on the proceeds of his criminal activity.⁵⁶ Andrews had three or four bedrooms set up for his patients, and when business was brisk, he made way for new patients by transferring convalescents to a rooming house not far away at 823 King Street West. Also living in the house were Andrews's nephew, Dell Andrews, age 25, Dell's wife, Cassie, age 27, and their young son.⁵⁷ Dell was a bartender at the nearby Gladstone Hotel, and Cassie helped with the household chores.

Lucy Letitia Denning was single and about 20 years old at the time of her abortion and death in the fall of 1893. The *News* said she had been "a tall, handsome brunette of sprightly manner and had many friends." Initially the press represented her as being "young and innocent," noting she was a church-going Anglican still living happily at home with her widowed and retired mother, Mrs. Mary Denning, age 58. Lucy Denning's father had been a labourer and her mother a laundress.⁵⁸ Denning had seven brothers and sisters, but in 1893, she and a younger brother were the only ones still living in the family home just west of the city centre at 44 Euclid Ave. The press described the house as a modest, roughcast cottage surrounded by tall lilacs.⁵⁹ Like so many working-class young women at the time, Denning did piecemeal sewing at home. From Johnson & Co., she would pick up pieces of cut cloth, bring them home, start sewing right after breakfast and continue until five, six, or eight in the evening, depending on the season, and then take the finished goods to the company. On Saturday nights, Lucy helped her older sister, Mrs. Helen Lewis, and her brother-in-law, Mr. Isaac Lewis, in their grocery store at 194 Elizabeth Street in the Ward, the immigrant, working-class community near the city's heart. According to Mary Denning, Lucy was so busy with work that she seldom went out in the evenings. Her mother and the press thus sought sympathy for Lucy Denning by representing her as a hard-working, chaste young woman living respectably in her modest family home.

Nevertheless, Denning had become pregnant. The press told a sensational story, reporting that she had been tricked into visiting a strange place where she had been drugged and "ruined" (raped), a version of events that presented Denning as a victim of male aggression and blameless for her pregnancy.⁶⁰ Police gave the story little credence and instead pursued a man suspected of being responsible for her pregnancy and possibly for having arranged the abortion. James Dunning, a young, married, travelling salesman based in Toronto, contended publicly that he had met Lucy at a skating rink, where she had initiated their relationship. Dunning admitted to having been "unduly intimate with her," but he took no responsibility for the pregnancy because, he said, she had gone with several young men.⁶¹ He maintained that he and Denning parted on good terms and he had not seen her

⁵⁶ *Globe*, November 4, 1893.

⁵⁷ AO, Toronto Jail Register, MS 3648, November 3 and 6, 1893.

⁵⁸ LAC, 1881 Census of Canada on-line, item no. 3562823, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1881/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=3562823>, and 1891 Census of Canada on-line, item no. 2791002, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1891/Pages/item.aspx?itemid=2791002>.

⁵⁹ *News*, November 3, 1893.

⁶⁰ *News*, November 3, 1893.

⁶¹ *Telegram*, November 3, 1893.

in months. He insisted that he had had nothing to do with the abortion. When interviewed by reporters, his main concern was that the publicity had tarnished his reputation, forcing him to quit his job and leave town. The *News* presented him sympathetically, saying that he felt “very bad” and when being interviewed quivered “like an aspen leaf.”⁶²

Like Jennie Leslie, when Lucy Denning realized she was pregnant, she turned for support to a woman just a little older than herself, in Denning’s case, her married sister Helen Lewis. It is Lewis’s version of events that the Crown relied on for its case and the one summarized here.⁶³ On October 20, when Denning appealed for help to end her pregnancy, Lewis did not waste time with oral remedies but instead took her immediately to 237 Shaw Street to see Doc Andrews, whom she had heard about from someone in her store. According to Lewis, Andrews was reassuring, telling them that Denning would not suffer during the procedure. “It was the simplest thing in the world and would only take twelve seconds,” he had said, and added, “After the girls got over their trouble they had a nice lawn and flower garden to walk around and tend the flowers.” He said he would charge \$100, although usually he charged \$500.⁶⁴ Andrews was suggesting they were getting a deal, although \$100 was in fact a high price to pay.

Up to this point, Denning had done what most unmarried young women in her position would have done and concealed her pregnancy from her mother. Now she needed money to pay for the abortion, and so Denning and her sister revealed the situation to their mother but not to other family members. The next morning Denning and Lewis returned to Shaw Street and paid Andrews \$90 lent by their accommodating mother and promised to pay the rest promptly. Andrews took Denning into the bathroom, where he performed an operation with an instrument—a metal stick with a sponge on the end—which brought on a miscarriage a couple of days later. When Lewis and her mother visited the clinic, they found that Denning’s health had rapidly declined. Fearing Denning would die at his clinic, Andrews decided to send Denning to Lewis’s house on Elizabeth Street. He waited until nighttime and called a hack. Dell and Cassie Andrews and Lewis accompanied Denning and made sure no one saw her. Isaac Lewis, Helen’s husband, reluctantly agreed to his wife’s decision to accommodate Denning. Before Helen Lewis had departed from his residence, Andrews asked her to tell him if Denning was about to die because when so warned, he would flee to Mexico (from where he could not be extradited).

At the Lewis home, Denning’s condition continued to worsen. Helen brought in the family physician, Dr. Andrew Eadie, and he in turn had Dr. James F. W. Ross examine her. Ross concluded that Denning was suffering from septicemia brought on by an abortion. He asked her who the abortionist was, naming two in the city. Denning reluctantly acknowledged that the first name mentioned was the one:

62 *Telegram*, November 6, 1893; *News*, November 6, 1893.

63 AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., “Statement of Helen Lewis,” November 27, 1893, pp. 2–17, 23–44.

64 AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., “Statement of Helen Lewis,” November 27, 1893, pp. 3–5.

Ransom J. Andrews.⁶⁵ Her reluctance was characteristic of women in her position, who hesitated to name someone who had provided a service. The doctor informed police of what Denning had revealed, both to clear his own name and Eadie's and in the expectation that police would lay charges against Andrews. It appears Ross may have taken a dying statement from Denning 30 hours before her death, a statement for use by the Crown if it prosecuted Andrews. For whatever reason, the press did not print the statement, nor did the Crown use it at Andrews's trial.⁶⁶ Lucy Denning died in her sister's home on November 2.

Denning's death prompted police to intervene in the case, as deaths due to abortions routinely resulted in police laying murder charges against suspected abortifacients, if located. On the evening of November 2, detectives went to 237 Shaw Street and found only Andrews's nephew Dell and his nephew's wife Cassie there. Police arrested them in connection with the murder of Lucy Denning. The detectives soon discovered that Doc Andrews and his wife had taken a train to Buffalo, where local police found them registered at the Fillmore House under aliases. When a Toronto detective at the hotel told Andrews that the charge was murder, he replied, "Well, if I had known . . . I would not have stopped at the border but would have kept going."⁶⁷ Andrews boasted to the Toronto detectives that he could afford to fight extradition proceedings, but after Buffalo police informed him he was still wanted by them on an abortion charge in that city, Ransom and Alice Andrews consented to accompany police to Toronto, where Ransom Andrews was charged with murder.

"Slain by an Abortioneer: Lucy Denning Dies from a Criminal Operation," shouted the *World* the day after Denning died. The press immediately blamed Doc Andrews for the crime and painted a picture of Denning's downfall. The *World's* coverage directly referred to a trope of popular melodrama with accompanying stereotypes: "It is a story beginning with the old, old chapter of a young girl's folly and fall; of betrayal by a conscienceless scoundrel and his abandonment of the victim. Add to this the performance of an abortion on the woman by an unscrupulous old villain and the outline of the tragedy is complete."⁶⁸ The coverage was damaging both to Denning's reputation and to Andrews's prospects before the courts. It was no surprise that when detectives returned by train to Toronto with Ransom and Alice Andrews, a large crowd awaited the prisoners at the station. "There was a jam, a rush and the police couldn't keep the crowd back," reported the *World*.⁶⁹

At the time of Lucy's death, the press expressed outrage and claimed that the community as a whole was stunned. "Another of these heartless cases of betrayal that shock the community far and wide has just come to light," said the *Telegram*.

65 AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., "Statement of Dr. James F. W. Ross," November 30, 1893, pp. 18–22.

66 The only report found on a dying declaration comes from the *Ottawa Citizen*, November 4, 1893. On dying declarations, see Leslie J. Reagan, "'About to Meet Her Maker': Women, Doctors, Dying Declarations, and the State's Investigation of Abortion, Chicago, 1867–1940," *Journal of American History*, vol. 77, no. 4 (March 1991), pp. 1240–1264, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2078261>.

67 *Telegram*, November 4, 1893.

68 *World*, November 3, 1893.

69 *World*, November 7, 1893. A search on ProQuest shows that the *Ottawa Citizen*, *Montréal Gazette*, and *Calgary Herald* covered the case. Many nondigitized Canadian newspapers probably covered it too.

“It is the sad story of ruin and crime—of seduction and death.” An editorial in the Hamilton *Herald* took a more critical view of the situation: “That this horrible infamy should exist in a city which makes a boast of its goodness and morality is an awful commentary on the hypocrisy of pompous officialdom, as well as on the wickedness of men and women.”⁷⁰ The remark was typical of what newspaper editors said in cases where a woman died following an abortion. Laid bare was the yawning gap between noisy moralizing that condemned abortionists at moments of public exposure and the quiet tolerance the public more usually showed them.

At the inquest into Lucy Denning’s death and the preliminary hearing, the same witnesses testified. (Because James Dunning had absconded before police could arrest him, he did not appear at these inquiries.) The jury at the inquest concluded that Ransom Andrews had murdered Lucy Denning, Alice Andrews was an accessory before the fact, and Charles (Dell) Andrews and Cassie Andrews were accessories after the fact. At the conclusion of their preliminary hearing, the magistrate told the four Andrews, dubbed by the press “the Andrews quartet,” that they would stand trial for murder at the next assizes and remain in jail until the conclusion of their trials. The Crown exercised wide discretion in deciding whether to charge and try individuals not suspected of performing the abortion but found on the scene where abortions took place. By sending all four Andrews to trial, authorities were taking a tough stand.

The Police Court hearing brought out further revelations. “Blacker and blacker becomes the story of this terrible scandal, as fresh revelations come from time to time to light,” declared the *Telegram*. Detectives had learned that Nellie Lafontaine of Pefferlaw, Ontario, a domestic, had come to Toronto pregnant in September and gone to stay with her sister, Mrs. Mary Jane O’Connell at 40 Gladstone Avenue.⁷¹ Once again, we see a young, single woman turning to an older female for assistance. In late October (when Denning was being treated by Andrews), Lafontaine’s sister took her to Andrews’s clinic and paid him \$50 to end Lafontaine’s pregnancy. When John O’Connell, Mary’s husband, learned what had happened, he went to the Andrews’s house, threatened the occupants, and angrily demanded, as he said, “possession of the girl and the \$50, but he got no satisfaction.” Lafontaine was no longer on the premises. “My poor sister is gone,” declared Mary O’Connell (who did not appear to share her husband’s concern for the \$50), “but where Heaven alone knows. Perhaps she too is – is – .” To her relief, however, the next evening, Lafontaine turned up at the O’Connells’ door in good health and no longer pregnant. Lafontaine had been convalescing at the King Street boarding house. Mary O’Connell warmly welcomed Lafontaine back.⁷²

At the time of the winter assizes, the Crown was not ready to proceed against the Andrews because a key witness, alleged seducer James Dunning, had not been located. Thus the trial actually began on May 9 at the spring assizes, although

⁷⁰ Toronto *Telegram*, November 3, 1893; Hamilton *Herald* editorial reprinted in *World*, November 7, 1893.

⁷¹ AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., “Statement of Mary Jane O’Connell,” December 30, 1893, pp. 96–97. Nellie signed her name “Lafountain,” but newspapers called her “Lafontaine.”

⁷² *Telegram*, November 3, 1893.

Dunning had still not responded to the subpoena and was absent.⁷³ By this point, the Crown had chosen not to proceed with the charge against Dell Andrews, presumably because of a lack of evidence. Justice William Meredith presided at the Andrews trial. Roger C. Clute, QC, presented the Crown's case. Defending Ransom Andrews was the distinguished (and expensive) barrister William Renwick Riddell, called to the bar ten years earlier and by 1893 a partner in the prominent Toronto firm Beatty, Blackstock, Chadwick & Riddell. John McGregor defended Alice Andrews, and Nelson D. Mills defended Cassie Andrews. From the all-male jury pool, the Crown challenged three men and the defence a full 27. The defence attorneys feared many in the jury pool had read too much prejudicial press comment about the case. In the end, the jury was composed mostly of young men.

According to the *Globe* reporter, at the start of the trial, "Doc" Andrews looked weak, his face shrunken, and his eyes bleary. Alice Andrews, in contrast, wore a fur cape, a hat of fashionable make, a veil with black dots, and a black dress.⁷⁴

Ransom, Alice, and Cassie Andrews were on trial for murder. Usually murder, as opposed to manslaughter, requires the demonstration of intent to kill. According to Canada's new criminal code of 1892, however, it was murder when the offender committed an act that he or she knew, or ought to have known, would end in death.⁷⁵ The understanding here was that Ransom Andrews had performed an abortion, a procedure that he ought to have known would end in death. The defence might have argued that Andrews, who had conducted many successful abortions, did not expect a death in this instance. The defence did not pursue that argument, however, perhaps because of the strength of public opinion that saw abortions as highly risky.

The Crown's case depended heavily on the testimony of Lucy Denning's sister, Helen Lewis. Lewis related the story told above with many additional details. She recalled where she sat when conversations took place, how members of the household went about their chores, and so forth, the level of detail making her account all the more persuasive. She remembered how after Denning took sick, Dr. Andrews had suggested that he would find an undertaker who would secretly bury Denning for \$200, and the family could pretend she had simply gone away. Andrews had said, "Them undertakers are regular devils; they can do anything; they could take up a body and put her under it, and no one could ever find her." Helen Lewis recalled that Alice Andrews had told her that many people had been at the clinic, including girls, widows, and married women, some of them coming from fashionable Jarvis Street.

Other witnesses appeared for the Crown. Denning's mother testified, explaining among other things why she loaned her daughter the money for the abortion: "to hide the disgrace from her family and the world." A cab driver recounted how he had driven a young woman and three others from the Andrews house to the Lewis home on Elizabeth Street under the cloak of darkness. The physicians who

⁷³ The following account of the trial derives from the *Globe*, May 10, 11, 12, 1894, and the *Telegram, News, and World*, May 10 and 11, 1894.

⁷⁴ *Globe*, May 10, 1894.

⁷⁵ Criminal Code, 1892, 55 & 56 Vict., c. 29, s. 227 (d) (Canada). Prior to 1892, it had been murder when someone died in the course of a felony, abortion being a felony.

examined Denning on her deathbed described her condition. Two doctors presented the findings of the post-mortem examination: that she had died from septicemia arising from a wound in the enlarged, empty uterus, and that she had still been pregnant a week or ten days before her death. The Crown entered some physical evidence into evidence: bottles of medicine, obstetrical instruments, and many letters, all found by police at the Andrews house.⁷⁶



Figure 3. Centre: Ransom Andrews testifying at his 1894 trial. Top Left: Doc Andrews's wife Alice Andrews. Top Right: Cassie Andrews, wife of Doc Andrews's nephew. Bottom Right: John Beighton, witness. Bottom Left: William Renwick Riddell, Ransom Andrews's lawyer, 1894 trial.

Source: *Toronto News*, November 3, 1893; May 9 and 10, 1894.

⁷⁶ For the full post-mortem report, see AO, CIF, RG 22-392-0-8594, MS 8556, York County, 1894, Andrews, Ransom J. et al., Crown Exhibit 1, Post-mortem Report of Dr. John Caven, pathologist, November 27, 1893. The letters are not in the files; we know about them only through newspaper coverage of them.

Earlier the press had reported on the cache of 200 or 300 letters police seized from 237 Shaw Street, private letters that became partly subject to public scrutiny. They revealed how large Andrews's practice was, documenting, said the *Telegram*, "criminal operations performed on married and single females all over the country." The letter writers offered to pay large sums for advice and successful treatment. In addition, there were letters thanking Andrews for what he had done.⁷⁷ The *News* contended that most of the letters came from women living in the better parts of Toronto, but there were also many from outside the city, including from London, Owen Sound, Seaforth, and elsewhere. Police gave journalists access to the letters, and without revealing identities, the *News* described some of their contents. A Port Perry woman, nicely recovering from her abortion, said that there had been a great scare in town about her absence but that her return allayed all anxiety. A letter from a widow suggested she had been treated successfully by Andrews once before but was in trouble again. Altogether, the correspondence "showed Andrews was making a fortune."⁷⁸

By the time the Crown finished with its witnesses, the case against Andrews looked formidable, but the defence had yet to have its turn. The defence first called John Beighton, a furniture dealer on Queen Street West. He swore that on October 20 he had visited the Andrews house with bed slats, which he took upstairs to the attic flat accompanied by Alice Andrews. While he was standing at the head of the stairs, he had overheard Dr. Andrews talking to Helen Lewis in the hallway below. Andrews had said, "I will have nothing to do with this girl, she has been tampered with." (This expression was a discreet way of saying that someone had already treated her to induce an abortion.) Lewis had asked him who had told him so, and he had answered that the girl had done so herself. Alice Andrews had gone downstairs and told her husband to have nothing to do with Lucy Denning.

Ransom Andrews then testified in his own defence. (The law had recently changed, giving the accused the opportunity to testify in their defence.) The *Globe* reporter observed that he told his story in a "whining, plaintive voice, with an occasional burst of senile anger, and at one point in his evidence burst into tears."⁷⁹ The derogatory depiction made Andrews appear unmanly, unable to exercise self-control. According to Andrews, when Lucy Denning came to him he examined her in the bathroom, finding she had already been operated on and was about to miscarry. She told him another doctor had operated on her, testimony the Crown objected to; the judge sustained the objection. Andrews continued, saying that he had a conversation with Helen Lewis outside the bathroom. He told her that he would have nothing to do with her sister because she had been "badly tampered with." Lewis said, "For god's sake don't go back on us like this." He told Denning to put her clothes back on and go home. They prevailed upon him to let her remain with him, however. His wife, who had been in the attic, overheard the conversation and, coming downstairs, told him to have nothing to do with the Denning girl. "And," said the old man in the box, taking out his handkerchief and with his voice choked

⁷⁷ *Telegram*, November 3, 1893.

⁷⁸ *News*, November 3, 1893.

⁷⁹ *Globe*, May 11, 1894.

with sobs, "I wish to God I never had."⁸⁰ While it's true that Andrews had much to regret about the case, he may have been playing to the jury by appearing contrite.

Andrews recalled that at that time he did not think Denning was in any danger and expected her to miscarry within a day or two. He swore he had used no instruments on her. She delivered a fetus, which he put down the toilet. The Crown introduced into evidence two fetuses, preserved at his house, but Andrews said they were the results of legitimate miscarriages.⁸¹ On the Wednesday, Andrews testified, Denning had become delirious and tried to use a catheter on herself, but he took it from her. He was suggesting that Denning understood that he had not performed an abortion on her. Andrews said that on the Saturday, Denning insisted on going home to her sister's house, although he advised her to stay on. They called a cab for her. Nephew Dell carried her downstairs and out to the cab. "On the way down she laughed very heartily," recalled Andrews, "saying that she had often seen Dell Andrews but never expected that he would be hugging her."

On cross-examination, Andrews said that Helen Lewis and Mary Denning had initiated the conversation about burial, not him. After much hesitation, however, he admitted to having disparaged undertakers. As for Nellie Lafontaine, he maintained that she had not been at his house "to be relieved of a child." He explained that he had fled to the United States not because of the Denning case but because of the threat made to him by Lafontaine's brother-in-law, John O'Connell, who was violent. Because the Crown attorney kept pressing him, Andrews broke down, exclaimed that he was an old man, and begged for mercy. When asked about his past, he said that a court had convicted him of procuring an abortion in 1885 because his counsel did not handle the case properly and, back then, the law had prevented him from testifying. He had paid his lawyer \$600, thinking that he was the best criminal lawyer in the land, but he had not found him so.

Alice Andrews next appeared to testify in her own defence. In the eyes of the reporter for the *World*, she was "a pleasant-looking little woman" who gave her evidence with great composure and was unflustered by the cross-examination.⁸² She explained that she had first seen Lucy Denning as she had come down from the attic where she had been fitting bed slats with John Beighton. She heard her husband saying to the two women, "you can go home; she has been badly tampered with." She gave the rest of the conversation as Beighton and her husband gave it. She further testified that at one point she saw Lucy with a pair of scissors trying to operate on herself. She insisted that she never participated in her husband's medical practice. She said her husband's business was "curing private diseases and selling pills for suppression," (i.e., medicine to bring on a woman's period). No one ever came to the house for an abortion. Her testimony contradicted much of what Helen Lewis had said, and in the eyes of the *Globe* reporter, corroborated her husband's testimony "in every particular."⁸³

80 *Globe*, May 11, 1894.

81 *World*, May 11, 1894.

82 *World*, May 11, 1894.

83 *Globe*, May 11, 1894. "Suppression" referred to treatment intended to suppress women's irregular periods and return them to a normal cycle.

Dr. John Ferguson testified that he did not believe that the catheter produced in court caused the wound described in the autopsy report. Dr. Winnett, a physician and member of the faculty of the University of Toronto, agreed with Ferguson on most points, as did a Dr. J. E. Elliott. Dr. Samuel McCully, a specialist in blood-poisoning cases, said he did not see in the post-mortem report any trace of improper treatment. In the opinion of these doctors, the blood poisoning began a day or two before her death, that is to say, while Lucy had been staying at the Lewis house and not while she had been at the Andrews house. That concluded the defence's evidence. At this point, MacGregor asked for the discharge of his client, Alice Andrews, but Judge Meredith refused. Authorities had already discharged Cassie Andrews for lack of evidence against her.

Riddell, Ransom Andrews's attorney, then addressed the jury, saying that, given the newspapers had tried his client on partial evidence, he was pleased that at last his client's story had come out. Throughout Riddell's 90-minute address, newspapers reported that Alice Andrews had sobbed bitterly with her face hidden on her husband's shoulder. Riddell described Dr. Andrews as an old man, gray, stooping, halting, and "tottering to the grave." He argued that there was nothing evidently wrong with Lucy Denning when she left the Andrews house, and that she had contracted blood poisoning at the Lewis home. He speculated that, while delirious at the Andrews house, Denning, believing herself to be still pregnant, had injured herself with scissors or a catheter. McGregor argued that no evidence was produced that connected Alice Andrews with Denning's death.

Clute then addressed the jury for the Crown. The newspaper synopsis is succinct. It says that he maintained that Andrews was a man who trafficked in human life and was guilty of the gravest offence of which a man can be guilty. The court adjourned.

The next morning, Justice Meredith delivered his charge to the jury, speaking for over an hour about the contrasting arguments made by the prosecution and the defence. His direction was not entirely one-sided. He emphasized that the law says it is murder if the offender does an act he knows is likely to cause death; "abortion is a heinous crime and one liable to cause death." He asked the jury to consider what reason Denning's sister and mother might have for lying and whether they should be tried on a charge of procuring an abortion. On the other hand, he noted that a person in Andrews's position would be apt to swear to almost anything to escape from his terrible position. Andrews swore he did not perform abortions, but the judge asked whether \$100 seem more like the price of an abortion than the cost of a convalescence. He invited the jury to consider whether Alice Andrews's story of the scissors was plausible. They should consider, too, whether the manner in which Denning had been removed from the house—a nighttime, clandestine journey—fit the defence's story. He drew attention to Beighton's evidence as being of special importance and read aloud his testimony from the stenographer's notes. It was the testimony that did most to exonerate the Andrews.

While the jury was out, there was a noisy commotion in the corridors as a huge crowd of members of the public pressed to get into the courtroom to hear the verdict. Riddell took exception to the judge's charge, saying he should have warned

the jury that an accomplice's testimony is unsafe and needs careful scrutiny. As procurers of the abortion, Helen Lewis and Mary Denning were accomplices in the murder, and the judge should have told the jury that. He asked that should the verdict be guilty, the judge reserve the case. Instead, the judge recalled the jury and explained what Riddell's concerns were.⁸⁴ The jury retired again and after 90 minutes returned to declare both prisoners "Not Guilty."

On hearing the verdict, Andrews and his wife exchanged smiles but otherwise displayed no emotion. Riddell congratulated his client, who shook his hand warmly. The Crown held up the departure of the Andrews while deliberating whether to detain them on a charge of performing an abortion on Nellie Lafontaine but decided against doing so. Andrews and his wife then left the courthouse free. The *Globe* reported they immediately left town, probably for Buffalo. Police then laid a charge against Andrews for the abortion of Nellie Lafontaine as a way "to keep them out of the country for good."⁸⁵ All the press condemnation of the Andrews notwithstanding, the "not guilty" verdict met with general approval among people in the streets, reported the *Telegram*, the only newspaper to comment on the public reaction.⁸⁶ The evidence that Andrews had performed an abortion that caused Denning's death was insufficient.

Conclusion

Ransom Andrews's abortion practice was no secret. Women in crisis readily found his clinics. He advertised his services, in somewhat coded language because of their illegality. Andrews combined his practice and his home, as was typical of physicians in Ontario at the time. The premises were no backstreet dens of the stereotype but substantial houses large enough to accommodate a few women for treatment and convalesce at the same time. Andrews's method combined then available abortion techniques. He offered oral abortifacients, cold-water injections to the uterus while the patient was standing, and mechanical procedures. A witness described one of his implements as a sponge on a metal stick, and the Crown entered a catheter into evidence.

In 1885 and 1893, Andrews's illegal activities came to the attention of the state. In the earlier case, the woman's father pressed police to intervene, and in the latter, the sharply declining health of the woman after her abortion led a physician to alert police who moved quickly upon her death. A state-sanctioned coroner's inquest concluded Andrews had murdered Lucy Denning. In both cases, the magistrate at a police court hearing determined that Andrews (and others) would stand trial at the assize court, which duly occurred.

Andrews's two trials, though they relied on a similar defence, ended with opposite verdicts. In both trials, the defence argued that others had attempted to induce miscarriages before the women had seen Andrews; he had simply provided

⁸⁴ *Telegram*, May 11, 1894.

⁸⁵ *Globe*, May 14, 1894. I have found no trace of Ransom Andrews after they left town. It is likely that they lived in Buffalo, where an Alice C. Address appears in the 1920 US Census as a 50-year-old widow. US Federal Census, 1920, Buffalo Ward 22, District 0210, Ancestry.com.

⁸⁶ US Federal Census, 1920, Buffalo Ward 22, District 0210, Ancestry.com.

the women with legal, follow-up health care. In each trial, the Crown chose to rely heavily on a single witness to make its case: Jennie Leslie herself in 1885 and Lucy Denning's sister, Helen Lewis, in 1894. Having Jennie Leslie available to testify was an advantage for the Crown. Although her evidence was uncorroborated, it provided the jury with a persuasive first-hand account of what Andrews had allegedly done. Andrews's conviction also depended on a crucial and unusual judicial decision. The trial judge failed to warn the jury that uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice (in this case Leslie herself) should be regarded skeptically, and when Andrews's lawyer challenged the court on that point, the chief justice found against him. In the 1894 trial, Lucy Denning could not testify because she had died, and so Andrews's lawyer had a freer hand in painting an alternative scenario to the Crown's case. Evidence from John Beighton, the furniture dealer, corroborated what Ransom and Alice Andrews said had happened. Without Beighton, the verdict might have gone against them. At the very least, the Andrews were lucky that the furniture dealer had been on the scene. Alternatively, it is possible that Ransom Andrews bought his testimony. At precisely the right moment, Beighton had been within hearing distance of the crucial conversation and standing in a part of the house where strangers would not normally be welcome. In both trials, Ransom Andrews used his considerable financial resources to retain top barristers; in one case, it did not pay and he was convicted, but in the other, it did pay and he got off.

In both cases, the young women defied state authority and demonstrated their autonomy by choosing to control their bodies and seek abortions. Public condemnation of their choice reflected the dominant patriarchal culture that constrained women's autonomy. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, urbanization raised fears about the growing autonomy of women who left their families, migrated to cities for jobs, and were tempted to stray in their moral behaviour.⁸⁷ In the Jennie Leslie and Lucy Denning cases, however, journalists were unable to sound that particular alarm. After all, Leslie lived with her parents in small-town Ontario when she became pregnant, and Denning's pregnancy came while she lived with her widowed mother and brother in the city.

While Jennie Leslie and Lucy Denning demonstrated autonomy, they were not on their own. In their crises, both had crucial support from women. Leslie turned to her boyfriend's older sister, who provided advice, abortifacients, and a referral to Doc Andrews. Denning sought help from her older, married sister, who took her to Andrews's clinic, visited there frequently, and sheltered and nursed her in the period of her illness and death. Although ashamed to reveal her situation to her mother, Denning did so when confronted with the need to get money to pay for her abortion. Her mother provided nearly all the substantial fee, no doubt drawing on her precious savings as a working-class widow. Another single woman in the same predicament, Nellie Lafontaine, came to Toronto from small-town Ontario to seek the help of her married sister, who took her to Andrews, helped pay for the abortion, and afterward welcomed her back into her home.

87 Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

Such support from women contrasts with the behaviour of men involved with the women who had the abortions. None of the men who impregnated the women took responsibility for the pregnancies by marrying and providing for the child, the behaviour Victorians prescribed in such situations. Jennie Leslie's boyfriend at least went so far as to provide some money for the abortion and to accompany her to Andrews's clinic. The man police believed had impregnated Lucy Denning skipped town, failed to show when police subpoenaed him, and avoided prosecution. In sharp contrast to the support Nellie Lafontaine received from her sister, her brother-in-law aggressively threatened the people at the Andrews house and demanded the return of Nellie and the \$50 paid to Ransom Andrews.

By having an abortion, single women typically hoped to avoid public exposure of their pregnancies and the resultant shaming. As it turned out, the abortions of Leslie and Denning brought them not the anonymity they sought but enormous public scrutiny. The press depicted Leslie as a victim of male seduction and male irresponsibility and implied she had been too weak or innocent to defend her chastity. Newspapers portrayed Denning in much the same manner, although they reported that the man she had "gone with" had represented her as having been forward and having had sex with several men. The two women's Whiteness in an overwhelmingly White population did not protect them from painful public scrutiny and disgrace. Their modest or working-class origins made them fair game for the journalists, a point Dubinsky makes about sensational coverage of sex crimes.⁸⁸ The tropes of popular melodrama reinforced familiar stereotypes: the dangerous abortionist, cunning seducer, and vulnerable young woman.

Although police arrested everyone in the Andrews's clinics in 1885 and 1893, their prime target was Ransom J. Andrews. In 1885, a *News* reporter noted that Andrews had been performing abortions at his Gould Street premises for many years and called him "probably one of the best known men in Toronto."⁸⁹ The latter phrase was no doubt an exaggeration, but it points to both Andrews's notoriety and the tolerance the public and authorities generally showed abortionists who conducted their illegal trade virtually in broad daylight.

While the law and respectable opinion consistently condemned abortion as both illegal and despicable, only when cases burst onto the public scene did the press and public figures vociferously call for the suppression of abortionists and recognize the evident hypocrisy. For example, when in 1875, the court convicted Arthur and Alice Davis of murder because a woman died following an abortion, the *Toronto Leader* declared, "The unfortunate couple had been practicing their abominable avocation for years, and yet the authorities did not recognize their culpability until a revolting murder has been committed." Commenting on an 1877 murder conviction in rural Ontario, the *Globe* observed, "There is something horrible in the idea of a professional abortionist being established in a quiet rural district, and his presence and work being taken as much matters of concern as if he had been a veterinary

88 Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, p. 95. Because Jennie Leslie's father was a hotel keeper and shop owner of unknown means, it is difficult to assess her class position.

89 *News*, December 11, 1885.

surgeon and devoted his time and labour to the best interests of the community."⁹⁰ How is the public's usual tolerance of abortion best explained? Historian Carolyn Strange argues, "It appears from the small number of cases prosecuted in the 1880s and early 1890s and the high proportion of acquittals that most Torontonians lent tacit approval to the underground business that discretely saved women and their families from disgrace."⁹¹ An editorial in the *World* commenting on Andrews's 1893 case confirms the point. "We bow to the conventional rule that the less said about some things the better," it declared, but then added that that rule did not apply in the case of "this wretched old miscreant."⁹²

The Andrews trials show some of the hazards and costs of terminating pregnancies in an era when the state outlawed abortions. The risks for working-class women who took measures to end pregnancies were enormous. Botched abortions meant painful suffering and sometimes, as in the case of Lucy Denning, death. When a woman survived an abortion in which police intervened, as was the case with Jennie Leslie, she faced the scrutiny of the press, police, and the courts, and the humiliation of having her moral behaviour condemned publicly. Once a case exploded onto front pages of newspapers, the abortion providers, whatever their motives, inevitably found themselves demonized for their illegal activity. Although Ransom Andrews successfully ended Jennie Leslie's unwanted pregnancy and she resumed her life, he acquired a criminal record and served five years in Kingston Penitentiary for his efforts. In his trial for the murder of Lucy Denning, Andrews faced possible conviction and a mandatory death sentence. He was fortunate the verdict went his way in the second trial. His financial means derived from his abortion practice played no small part in his good fortune. Certainly, it permitted him to buy top legal talent; perhaps it enabled him to pay for crucial testimony.

90 *Leader*, October 18, 1875, and June 8, 1877.

91 Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, pp. 71–72.

92 *World*, November 6, 1893.

BC STUDIES

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