

They were talking of the glory of the land beyond the skies.
Of the light and of the gladness to be found in
Of the flowers ever blooming, of the never-ceas-
ing songs,
Of the wand rings through the golden streets,
happy white-robed throngs:
And said father, leaning cosily back in his easy
chair.
(Father always was a master hand for comfort
everywhere!)

"What a joyful thing 'twould be to know that
what I do is his, is over,
One would straightway hear a welcome from the
blessed shining shore!"
And Isabelle, our oldest girl, glanced upward
from the red
She was smiling, on a water-jug, and mur-
mured, "Yes, indeed!"
And Marion, the next in age, a moment dropped her book.
And a "Yes, indeed!" responded, with a most
ecstatic look.

But mother, gray-haired mother, who had come
to sweep the room,
With a patient smile on her thin face, leaned
lightly on her broom—
Poor mother! no one ever thought how much
she did—
And said, "I hope it is not wrong to agree with
you.
But see me to the time when I die, before I join
the best.
I'd like just for a little while to lie in my grave
and rest."

—*Harper's Weekly.*

A DYING CONFESSION.

BY LILY M. CURRY.

There was no color in the outer world
that day—no vivid color. The leaves,
which lingered still upon the trees,
were languid and saffron-hued from the
lasting drought. The sky was clouded
over and the atmosphere chilled with
the whisper of approaching rain.

I had been thinking hard about my
trouble. Long before dawn I had
wakened from horrible dreams of Mignon—
dreams that she was false; long
before dawn I had tossed from side to
side upon my bed, and felt my eye-
balls burning and my heart beating
madly. I had tried then, desperately,
to compose myself, to master my emo-
tions; but I could not, for always as I
closed my eyes, she came before me,
brilliant and beautiful, taunting and
terrible. She came and crazed me with
her superb glance, her scornful lips.

As I lay waiting for the dawn, I re-
viewed the past. My thoughts traveled
swiftly back to the day of our mar-
riage, half a year before. Since
then what wretched fears, what help-
less terror had come to be my portion!

In making her my wife, I had hoped to
make her heart mine own forever; and
now it seemed to me that she could
laugh to look upon my dead face.

When daylight came at last, I aro-
ose and saw myself within the mirror—a
ghastly, haggard, desperate creature.

And suddenly I felt that she had
wrecked my body and my soul. I said
to myself that this should last no
longer; that I would know the worst
and abide by the knowledge.

She would return that day, she had
been two nights absent, on a visit to
friends of hers (whom yet I had not
seen), up in the country. At least this
was the story she had told me. I had
not sought for proof or disproof of her
words. I had not dared to seek for it.

She would not arrive until evening;
and the day yawned before me like a
terrible chasm. I wanted neither food
nor drink, but wandered aimlessly
about our apartments—our home,
which might have been a little
paradise, far above the ebb and flow of
the stormy town. Our home, which I
had cared to make so dainty she might
love me for the task. Alas!

There was no color in the outer
world, but even in the space where I
walked singly to and fro, the flames of
purgatory danced before my sight.

I could not choose but doubt her,
now that I had found that letter among
her private papers, found it in my
frenzied search the night before. A
letter from a former lover.

I read it many times that morning; it
was brief, yet full of meaning.

"I love you; I am wretched when
away from you. I cannot rest until we
meet again."

That was how it read.

It had no date.

I felt no compunctions at having
searched her desk. Why had she been
false to me? Had I not been faithful
and kind and loving? Had I not cher-
ished her according to my vow?

It was now a long time since I had
first noticed certain peculiar little ac-
tions of hers—impatient tossings of the
head, restive sighs, and curves of the
lip, which seemed to say, "you weary
me with your seditiousness, your jealous-
ous care. I love you no longer."

And then her latest actual complaint:
"Why do you torment me so? Have
I no individuality? For pity's sake, be
rational!"

Rational! With that petulant voice
ringing in my ears!

I continued to wander about our
rooms. At times her face came before
me—the face most dear to artist's eyes
—beautifully shaped, faultless in color-
ing, having the classic features of
Greece and the marvelous eyes of
Italy—eyes made fit to dizzy all men
who should behold them. And all
around that face were rings of soft
brown hair that reddened in the sun-
light.

As the day dragged wearily along, I
thought of various methods by which
to assure myself of what I must know
—or die. And so at length I framed
my resolution.

I would not go to meet her at the
station, but, instead, remain at home,
concealed, that she might believe me
gone. I would place a note upon the
center table, underneath the chandelier,
in the little parlor. This note
would promise my return the following
day. Her actions upon finding this
would tell the story.

Where to conceal myself!

Somewhere in the little parlor, where
she would enter and discover my note.

I made a slow circuit of the room,
inspecting carefully each separate article
of furniture, and considering what,
if any, shelter it might afford.

I started from the door leading into
our bed-chamber, and passed leftward

from the same.

First came Mignon's writing desk, a
pretty little ebony affair, in which she
treasured many things, as well I knew,
Some old photographs were there,
some faded flowers, some scraps of

poetry clipped from magazines—some
letters! I had not replaced the note
I had found. It still burned over my
heart—burned as it were a living coal.
I looked for some time at the desk;
I saw things with wondrous distinctness.
There was dust—minute particles of
dust upon the ledges. I rubbed it off
with my bare finger.

Next was the window. I pushed
aside the Turcoman curtain and looked
down upon the street. How dull and
cold the whole world seemed! How
empty! Before the window stood the
little chair she often sat in; just a little
willow rocker with a square of painted
satin. My heart ached harder as I
fancied her sitting there.

Past these stood her piano. Past
this the music-rack, with all her songs
upon it. Ah, me!

But mother, gray-haired mother, who had come
to sweep the room,
With a patient smile on her thin face, leaned
lightly on her broom—
Poor mother! no one ever thought how much
she did—
And said, "I hope it is not wrong to agree with
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upon her lying there, her white face
froze my very heart's blood.

"Oh, God be merciful!" I tried to
whisper.

I had a terrible fear of touching her.
I was growing cold from head to foot.
I clung to a chair for support.

Her eyes unclosed; she looked up
and, seeing me, tried to smile. She
moved her lips, but uttered no sound.
Then I saw her slowly drag herself
toward my feet, until she could reach
up and clasp my knee.

"Oh, God!" I moaned, with frozen
tongue.

She smiled at me, though her eyes
were dimmed with death. Her lips
parted for one soft, sighing syllable.

"Love—"

And she fell back and was still.

I knew that she was dead—that I had
murdered her instead of the coward
who had fled and left her to die.

I could move now; all was over.

My pretty wife, my Mignon, lay dead at my
feet and I could move.

I dared not bend as yet to lift her.
I saw the bundle he had dropped. I
stooped and lifted it—it was heavy. I
opened it with trembling hands and
looked stupidly at the contents. Then
I began to shriek aloud for aid, for all
the world to come and know that she
was murdered.

They came in at my wild cries; they
lifted her tenderly, as I had had no
strength to do. They took the sack
from my hands—the sack of burglar's
tools!

And still I shrieked.
The blood-stained knife was on the
floor. They seemed to think it had
been his. *

Mignon was dead. They laid her
upon her bed, and crossed her hands
and set some candles on the table.

I dared to look upon her now, she
lay as white and peaceful as a lily.

"Oh, Christ!" I said. "If I have
wholly wronged her?"

The night wore on. It was at day-
break that I took from my pocket the
accursed letter which had spoken her
false. I stood before the window with
that letter in my hand. I remembered
that it had no date. Why had I not
examined the envelope—the postmark?

I drew it out a little further and
slipped in behind.

* * *

The room grew dusky; the afternoon
was slipping away.

I walked up and down the room; up
and down, up and down—thinking. I
had not broken my fast the lifelong
day. My mouth seemed parched, my
tongue swollen. I felt the shadow of
approaching calamity.

As it grew dark I went out to a flor-
ist's and bought a little bunch of flowers,
carnations, with surrounding sprays
of mimosa.

Coming back, I stopped and spoke
to the janitor of the building, giving
him a message for my wife, who must
soon arrive.

I went up hurriedly after this, for
there was no time to lose. I put the
sweet and spicy blossoms in a tumbler of water,
and set the tumbler on the center-table, underneath the
chandelier. I had a vague notion that the
little offering might touch her heart and
cause it to yearn for me, who loved her so.
I wrote my note hastily, telling her I had been called away, but would
return to-morrow. I placed the note
beside the flowers. I lit one jet of the
gas above, and left it burning dimly.

It was time for her to come. I drew
each moment more feverish and impatient.
I felt, besides, a faintness from long fasting. I went back through
the bed-chamber to the dressing-room
for a swallow of ice-water. There was
some fruit in a dish upon the table. I
thought perhaps a taste of this might
cool my throat. I took an orange and hurried
back to the parlor, slipping into my hiding-place behind the clock.

Why did she not come? It was past
the time now, and I began to imagine
all terrible things. I fancied that she had
come, had met the janitor at the
entrance, had received from him my
message and taken advantage of my
absence to return or send word to some
lover. The thought fairly choked me.
My throat was painfully parched.

I took out my large pocket-knife and
began to cut the orange. My hands
trembled constantly.

At length I heard footsteps. This
was torture, but I endured it.

The gas burned dimly. The spicy
fragrance of the flowers upon the table
seemed to fill the room. I stood motion-
less, listening for the sound of her
latchkey. I still clutched the orange
and the open pocket-knife.

I held my breath. *

She entered alone, and let the door
swing carelessly after her; it did not
close entirely. She gazed inquiringly
about, then advanced toward the table.

"Flowers?" I heard her say. "Car-
nations—mignonette!"

I saw her take my letter in one
hand, while with the other she reached
up to turn the gas higher. The
chandelier was high, and she was not very
tall, so that she did not reach it at the
first effort. Her lithe form and beau-
tiful, uplifted face seemed to draw me
toward her. I longed to rush out and
clasp her to my heart. Heavens! what
demon held me back?

She balanced there on tiptoe.

"I wonder if he will come?" I heard
her say. Then I heard something else
—a soft sound, as if the wind had
pushed ajar the door she had not fully
closed.

She did not turn; she did not seem
to hear; her slender fingers were upon
the gilt of the chandelier.

What happened next was swift and
strange—and all in silence. A man
had stepped within the room, closing
the door noiselessly, and darting forward,
encircled her head with his hands, blinding her eyes ere she had
seen him.

Something heavy dropped from his
arm to the floor. But not a word was
spoken.

She did not scream or struggle; it
seemed to me there was a smile upon
her lips, as if she knew her lover.

The gas went suddenly out.

Just for a second then I felt myself
crouching like a wild beast. In that
second I seemed to know an eternity of
death.

The Judge then asked the prisoner if
he had anything to say why the sentence
of death should not be pronounced
against him.

"Well, not much," said the prisoner,
with imperturbable sang froid. "All I
have to say to the court and everybody
connected with it is that, if it affords
them any pleasure to have me hanged till I am dead, dead, dead, then
this court and all connected with it may
just go to hell, hell, hell."

"Ah!" instantly exclaimed the Court,
in the Court's case the order is mandatory,
but in that of the prisoner it is
only advisory. Mr. Sheriff, let the sentence
be executed."—*Nashville American*.

The door flashed open. I saw him
fleeing from me down the lighted hall,
and Mignon quivered at my feet.

* * *

I lit the gas; how, I know not. I

closed the door. But when I looked
upon her lying there, her white face
froze my very heart's blood.

"Oh, God be merciful!" I tried to
whisper.

I had a terrible fear of touching her.
I was growing cold from head to foot.
I clung to a chair for support.

Her eyes unclosed; she looked up
and, seeing me, tried to smile. She
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toward my feet, until she could reach
up and clasp my knee.

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