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Francis Silver's confession

Ballad of Frankie Silver Lyrics

Newspaper article in the Lenoir Topic, March 24, 1886. This article contains the lyrics to a song known as "The Ballad of Frankie Silver" that was sung in the mountains of North Carolina well into the twentieth century.

Francis "Frankie" Silver was found guilty for the murder of her husband, Charles Silver, and hung in Burke County in 1833. Local lore was that Frankie sang or recited the words below at her hanging, confessing to the murder of her husband. According to Maxine McCall, researcher and author of *They Won't Hang a Woman,* the song attributed to Frankie was actualy written by a teacher, Thomas Scott.

The clipping reads:

We publish, by request, the following confession of Francis Silvers, who was hanged in this place [Morganton] on the 12th of July, 1833, for the murder of her husband. Some of our readers will remember the facts in the case.

This dreadful, dark and dismal day
Has swept my glories all away,
My sun goes down, my days are past,
And I must leave this world at last.

Oh! Lord, what will become of me?
I am condemned you all now see,
To heaven or hell my soul must fly
All in a moment when I die.

Judge Daniel has my sentence pass'd,
Those prison walls I leave at last,
Nothing to cheer my drooping head
Until I'm numbered with the dead.

But oh! that Dreadful Judge I fear;
Shall I that awful sentence hear:
"Depart ye cursed down to hell
And forever there to dwell"?

I know that frightful ghosts
I'll see Gnawing their flesh in misery,
And then and there attended be
For murder in the first degree.

There shall I meet that mournful face
Whose blood I spilled upon this place;
With flaming eyes to me he'll say,
"Why did you take my life away?"

His feeble hands fell gently down,
His chattering tongue soon lost its sound,
To see his soul and body part
It strikes with terror to my heart.

I took his blooming days away,
Left him no time to God to pray,
And if his sins fall on his head
Must I not bear them in his stead?

The jealous thought that first gave strife
To make me take my husband's life,
For months and days I spent my time
Thinking how to commit the crime.

And on a dark and doleful night
I put his body out of sight,
With flames I tried him to consume,

But time would not admit it done.

You all see me and on me gaze,
Be careful how you spend your days,
And never commit this awful crime,
But try to serve your God in time.

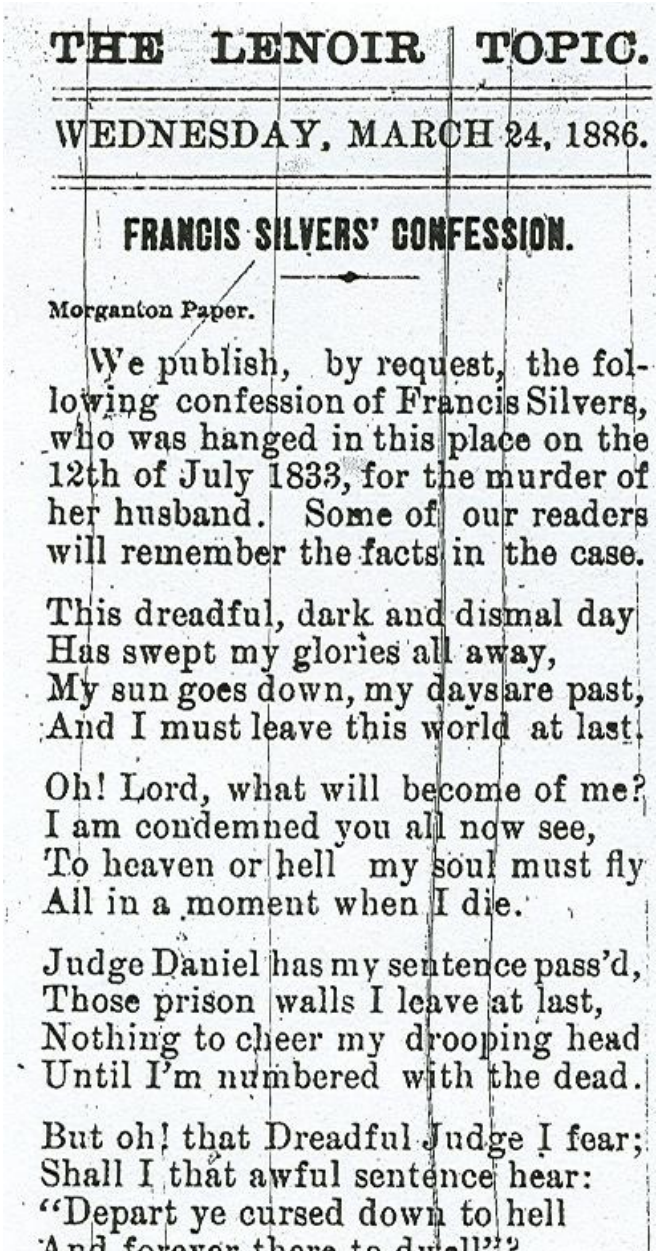
My mind on solemn subjects roll;
My little child, God bless its soul!
All you that are of Adam's race,
Let not my faults this child disgrace.

Farewell good people you all now see
What my bad conduct's brought on me—
To die of shame and disgrace
Before this world of human race.

Awful indeed to think on my death,
In perfect health to lose my breath.
Farewell, my friend, I bid adieu.
Vengeance on me must now pursue.

Great God, how shall I be forgiven?
Not fit for earth, not fit for heaven;
But little time to pray to God,
For now I try that awful road.

**The last two stanzas do not appear in the clipping but were in the original article.



THE LENOIR TOPIC.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1886.

FRANCIS SILVERS' CONFESSION.

Morganton Paper.

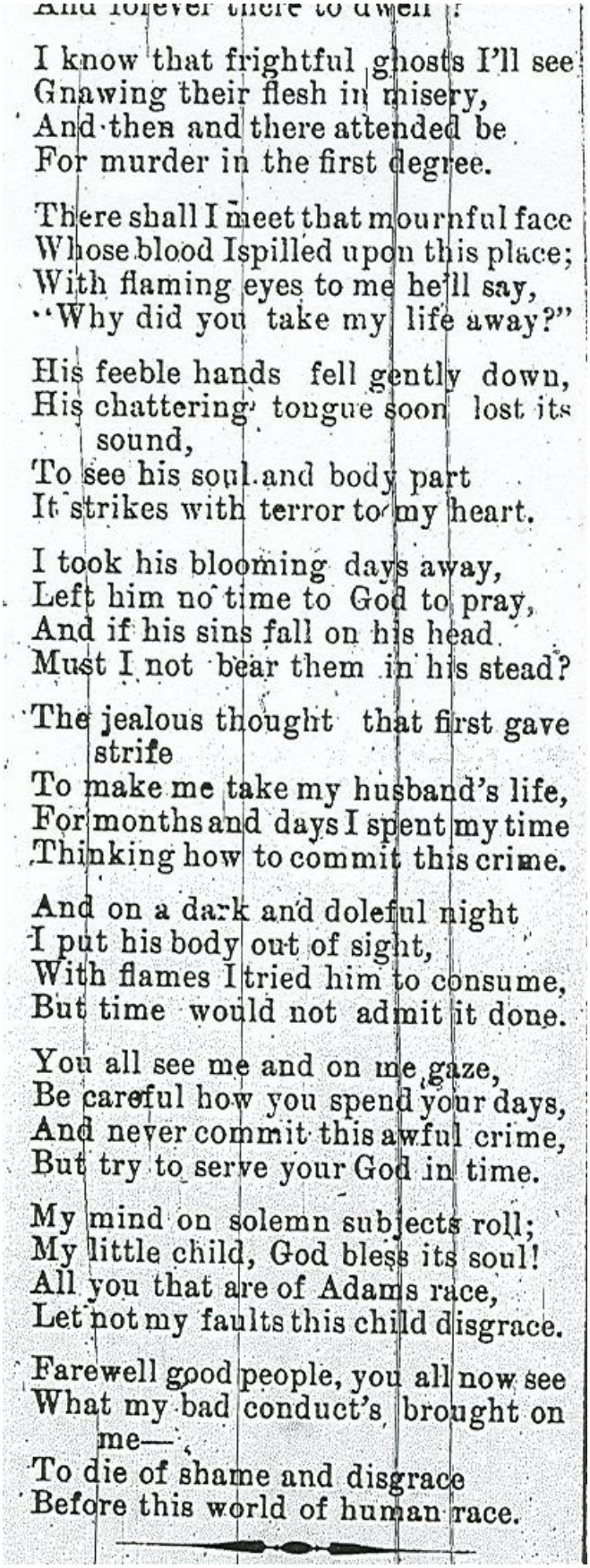
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Citation (Chicago Style): "Francis Silvers' Confession." *The Lenoir Topic,* March 24, 1886.

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