

William and Margaret

By David Mallet

'Twas at the silent midnight hour,
When all were fast asleep,
In glided Margaret's grimly ghost,
And stood at William's feet.

Her face was pale like April morn
Clad in a wintry cloud;
And clay-cold was her lily-hand
That held her sable shroud.

So shall the fairest face appear,
When youth and years are flown;
Such is the robe that kings must wear,
When death has reft their crown.

Her bloom was like the springing flower,
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
Just op'ning to the view.

But love had, like the canker-worm,
Consum'd her early prime:
The rose grew pale, and left her cheek;
She died before her time.

'Awake!' she cry'd, 'Thy true love calls,
Come from her midnight grave:
Now let thy pity hear the maid
Thy love refus'd to save.

'This is the dumb and dreary hour,
When injur'd ghosts complain,
And aid the secret fears of night
To fright the faithless man.

'Bethink thee, William, of thy fault,
Thy pledge and broken oath;
And give me back my maiden-vow,
And give me back my troth.

'How could you say my face was fair,

And yet that face forsake?
How could you win my virgin-heart,
Yet leave that heart to break?

‘Why did you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep?
Why said you, that my eyes were bright,
Yet left those eyes to weep?

‘How could you swear my lip was sweet,
And made the scarlet pale?
And why did I, young witless maid,
Believe the flatt’ring tale?

‘That face, alas! no more is fair;
Those lips no longer red;
Dark are my eyes, now clos’d in death;
And every charm is fled.

‘The hungry worm my sister is;
This winding-sheet I wear:
And cold and weary lasts our night,
Till that last morn appear.

‘But hark!—the cock has warn’d me hence—
A long and last adieu!
Come see, false man, how low she lies
That died for love of you.’

The lark sung loud, the morning smil’d,
And rais’d her glist’ring head:
Pale William quak’d in every limb;
Then, raving, left his bed.

He hied him to the fatal place
Where Margaret’s body lay,
And stretch’d him on the green grass turf
That wrapt her breathless clay.

And thrice he call’d on Margaret’s name,
And thrice he wept full sore:
Then laid his cheek on her cold grave,
And word spoke never more.