

The Widow's Home

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

Close on the margin of a brawling brook
That bathes the low dell's bosom, stands a Cot;
O'ershadow'd by broad Alders. At its door
A rude seat, with an ozier canopy
Invites the weary traveller to rest.
'Tis a poor humble dwelling; yet within,
The sweets of joy domestic, oft have made
The long hour not uncheerly, while the Moor
Was covered with deep snow, and the bleak blast
Swept with impetuous wing the mountain's brow!
On ev'ry tree of the near shelt'ring wood
The minstrelsy of Nature, shrill and wild,
Welcomes the stranger guest, and carolling
Love-songs, spontaneous, greets him merrily.
The distant hills, empurpled by the dawn
And thinly scatter'd with blue mists that float
On their bleak summits dimly visible,
Skirt the domain luxuriant, while the air
Breathes healthful fragrance. On the Cottage roof
The gadding Ivy, and the tawny Vine
Bind the brown thatch, the shelter'd winter-hut
Of the tame Sparrow, and the Red-breast bold.

There dwells the Soldier's Widow! young and fair
Yet not more fair than virtuous. Every day
She wastes the hour-glass, waiting his return,—
And every hour anticipates the day,
(Deceiv'd, yet cherish'd by the flatt'ring hope)
When she shall meet her Hero. On the Eve
Of Sabbath rest, she trims her little hut
With blossoms, fresh and gaudy, still, herself
The queen-flow'r of the garland! The sweet Rose
Of wood-wild beauty, blushing thro' her tears.

One little Son she has, a lusty Boy,
The darling of her guiltless, mourning heart,
The only dear and gay associate
Of her lone widowhood. His sun-burnt cheek
Is never blanch'd with fear, though he will climb
The broad oak's branches, and with brawny arm
Sever the limpid wave. In his blue eye

Beams all his mother's gentleness of soul;
While his brave father's warm intrepid heart
Throbs in his infant bosom. 'Tis a wight
Most valourous, yet pliant as the stem
Of the low vale-born lily, when the dew
Presses its perfum'd head. Eight years his voice
Has cheer'd the homely hut, for he could lisp
Soft words of filial fondness, ere his feet
Could measure the smooth path-way.

On the hills

He watches the wide waste of wavy green
Tissued with orient lustre, till his eyes
Ache with the dazzling splendour, and the main,
Rolling and blazing, seems a second Sun!
And, if a distant whitening sail appears,
Skimming the bright horizon while the mast
Is canopied with clouds of dappled gold,
He homeward hastes rejoicing. An old Tree
Is his lone watch-tow'r; 'tis a blasted Oak
Which, from a vagrant Acorn, ages past,
Sprang up, to triumph like a Savage bold
Braving the Season's warfare. There he sits
Silent and musing the long Evening hour,
'Till the short reign of Sunny splendour fades
At the cold touch of twilight. Oft he sings;
Or from his oaten pipe, untiring pours
The tune mellifluous which his father sung,
When HE could only listen;

On the sands

That bind the level sea-shore, will he stray,
When morn unlocks the East, and flings afar
The rosy day-beam! There the boy will stop
To gather the dank weeds which ocean leaves
On the bleak strand, while winter o'er the main
Howls its nocturnal clamour. There again
He chaunts his Father's ditty. Never more
Poor mountain minstrel, shall thy bosom throb
To the sweet cadence! never more thy tear
Fall as the dulcet breathings give each word
Expression magical! Thy Father, Boy,
Sleeps on the bed of death! His tongue is mute,
His fingers have forgot their pliant art,
His oaten pipe will ne'er again be heard
Echoing along the valley! Never more
Will thy fond mother meet the balmy smile
Of peace domestic, or the circling arm

Of valour, temper'd by the milder joys
Of rural merriment. His very name
Is now forgotten! for no trophied tomb
Tells of his bold exploits; such heraldry
Befits not humble worth: For pomp and praise
Wait in the gilded palaces of Pride
To dress Ambition's Slaves. Yet, on his grave,
The unmark'd resting place of Valour's Sons,
The morning beam shines lust'rous; The meek flow'r
Still drops the twilight tear, and the night breeze
Moans melancholy music!

Then, to ME,

O! dearer far is the poor Soldier's grave,
The Widow's lone and unregarded Cot,
The brawling Brook, and the wide Alder-bough,
The ozier Canopy, and plummy choir,
Hymning the Morn's return, than the rich Dome
Of glided Palaces! and sweeter far—
O! far more graceful! far more exquisite,
The Widow's tear bathing the living rose,
Than the rich ruby, blushing on the breast,
Of guilty greatness. Welcome then to me—
The Widow's LOWLY HOME: The Soldier's HEIR;
The proud inheritor of Heav'n's best gifts—
The mind unshackled and the guiltless Soul!