

Edmund's Wedding

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

By the side of the brook, where the willow is waving
Why sits the wan Youth, in his wedding-suit gay!
Now sighing so deeply, now frantickly raving
Beneath the pale light of the moon's sickly ray.
Now he starts, all aghast, and with horror's wild gesture,
Cries, "AGNES is coming, I know her white vesture!
"See! see! how she beckons me on to the willow,
"Where, on the cold turf; she has made our rude pillow.

"Sweet girl I yes I know thee; thy cheek's living roses
"Are chang'd and grown pale, with the touch of despair:
"And thy bosom no longer the lily discloses—
"For thorns, my poor AGNES, are now planted there!
"Thy blue, starry Eyes! are all dimm'd by dark sorrow;
"No more from thy lip, can the flow'r fragrance borrow;
"For cold does it seem, like the pale light of morning,
"And thou smil'st, as in sadness, thy fond lover, scorning!

"From the red scene of slaughter thy Edmund returning,
"Has dress'd himself gayly, with May-blooming flow'rs;
"His bosom, dear AGNES! still faithfully burning,
While, madly impatient, his eyes beam in show'rs!
"O! many a time have I thought of thy beauty—
"When cannons, loud roaring, taught Valour its duty;
"And many a time, have I sigh'd to behold thee—
"When the sulphur of War, in its cloudy mist roll'd me!

"At the still hour of morn, when the Camp was reposing,
"I wander'd alone on the wide dewy plain:
And when the gold curtains of Ev'ning were closing,
"I watch'd the long shadows steal over the Main!
"Across the wild Ocean, half frantic they bore me,
"Unheeding my groans, from Thee, AGNES, they tore me;
"But, though my poor heart might have bled in the battle,
"Thy name should have echoed, amidst the loud rattle!

"When I gaz'd on the field of the dead and the dying—
"O AGNES I my fancy still wander'd to Thee!
"When around, my brave Comrades in anguish were lying,
"I long'd on the death-bed of Valour to be.
"For, sever'd from THEE, my SWEET GIRL, the loud thunder

“Which tore the soft fetters of fondness asunder—
“Had only one kindness, in mercy to shew me,
“To bid me *die bravely*, that thou, Love, may’st *know me!*”

His arms now are folded, he bows as in sorrow,
His tears trickle fast, down his wedding-suit gay;
“My AGNES will bless me,” he murmurs, “to-morrow,
“As fresh as the breezes that welcome the day!”
Poor Youth! know thy AGNES, so lovely and blooming,
Stern Death has embrac’d, all her beauties entombing!
And, pale as her shroud in the grave she reposes,
Her bosom of snow, all besprinkled with Roses!

Her Cottage is now in the dark dell decaying,
And shatter’d the casements, and clos’d is the door,
And the nettle now waves, where the wild KID is playing,
And the neat little garden with weeds is grown o’er!
The Owl builds its nest in the thatch, and there, shrieking,
(A place all deserted and lonely bespeaking)
Salutes the night traveller, wandering near it,
And makes his faint heart, sicken sadly to hear it.

Then Youth, for thy habit, henceforth, thou should’st borrow
The Raven’s dark colour, and mourn for thy dear:
Thy AGNES for thee, would have cherish’d her Sorrow,
And drest her pale cheek with a lingering tear:
For, soon as thy steps to the Battle departed,
She droop’d, and poor Maiden! she died, broken hearted;
And the turf that is bound with fresh garlands of roses,
Is now the cold bed, where her sorrow reposes!

The gay and the giddy may revel in pleasure,—
May think themselves happy, their short summer-day;
May gaze, with fond transport, on fortune’s rich treasure,
And, carelessly sporting,—drive sorrow away:
But the bosom, where feeling and truth are united—
From folly’s bright tinsel will turn, undelighted—
And find, at the grave where thy AGNES is sleeping,
That the proudest of hours, is the lone hour of weeping!

The Youth now approach’d the long branch of the willow,
And stripping its leaves, on the turf threw them round.
“Here, here, my sweet AGNES! I make my last pillow,
“My bed of long slumber, shall be the cold ground!
“The Sun, when it rises above thy low dwelling,
“Shall gild the tall Spire, where my death-toll is knelling.

And when the next twilight its soft tears is shedding,
“At thy Grave shall the Villagers—witness *our* WEDDING!

Now over the Hills he beheld a group coming,
Their arms glitter'd bright, as the Sun slowly rose;
He heard them their purposes, fir distant, humming,
And welcom'd the moment, that ended his woes
And now the fierce Comrade, unfeeling, espies him,
He darts thro' the thicket, in hopes to surprise him;
But EDMUND, of Valour the dauntless defender,
Now smiles, while his CORPORAL bids him—“SURRENDER!”

Soon, prov'd a DESERTER, Stern Justice prevailing,
HE DIED! and his Spirit to AGNES is fled
The breeze, on the mountain's tall summit now sailing
Fans lightly the dew-drops, that spangle their bed!
The Villagers, thronging around, scatter roses,
The grey wing of Evening the western sky closes,—
And Night's sable pall, o'er the landscape extending,
In the mourning of Nature! the SOLEMN SCENE ENDING.