

David Mallet (?1705-65)

2 *Margaret's Ghost*

'Twas at the silent solemn hour,
When night and morning meet;
In glided Margaret's grimly ghost,
And stood at William's feet.

Her face was like an April morn, 5
Clad in a wintry cloud:
And clay-cold was her lily hand,
That held her sable shrowd.

So shall the fairest face appear, 10
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, 15
Just opening to the view.

But love had, like the canker worm,
Consum'd her early prime:
The rose grew pale, and left her cheek;
She dy'd before her time. 20

'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 dark and dreary hour, 25
When injur'd ghosts complain;

Now yawning graves give up their dead,
To haunt the faithless swain.

Bethink thee, William, of thy fault,
Thy pledge, and broken oath: 30
And give me back my maiden vow,
And give me back my troth.

Why did you promise love to me,
And not that promise keep?
Why did you swear mine eyes were bright, 35
Yet leave those eyes to weep?

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? 40

Why did you say my lip was sweet,
And made the scarlet pale?
And why did I, young witless maid,
Believe the flattering tale?

That face, alas! no more is fair; 45
These 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: 50
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, 55
Who dy'd for love of you.'

The lark sung loud; the morning smil'd,
With beams of rosy red:
Pale William shook in ev'ry limb,
And raving left his bed. 60

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

And thrice he call'd on Margaret's name, 65
And thrice he wept full sore:
Then laid his cheek to her cold grave,
And word spake never more.

1723

(From Thomas Percy, ed. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Vol. 3. With Memoir and Critical Dissertation by the Rev. George Gilfillan. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858. A rpt. entire from Percy's last edition of 1794)