

William Bell Scott (1811-90)

1 *A Bridal Race*

Sir Hubert mounted his little brown barb,  
Her jennette of Spain his bride;  
'My winsome Isabelle, my wife,'  
Quoth he, 'let's a wager ride!'

Quoth he, 'Sweet wife, let us ride a race, 5  
And this shall be the play,  
Whoever wins first to yon haw-tree,  
Shall do even as they may.

'And whether we live in the country,  
Or in town as I would still, 10  
Whoever wins first to yon haw-tree  
Shall have it as they will.'

'Done!' said she with a light high laugh,  
'I'm pleased with such as this;  
Let us sign the 'pact!' She leant across, 15  
As if she meant to kiss.

He thought to catch her limber waist,  
And really a kiss repay,  
But she gave her jennette the rein at once;  
She was off, she was away. 20

The little brown barb he shied aside,  
On galloped she merrilie,  
The race was short and she was the first,  
First by the red haw-tree.

'Now fie upon you, winsome wife!' 25  
Cried he, 'you ride unfair,  
For with that feint, that start too soon,  
You took me unaware.'

'What's fair,' quoth she with her light high laugh,

    'I do not care three straws!

30

Oh, I shall rule, yes, I shall rule,

    But you, love, shall make the laws!

1875

(From *Poems*. London, 1875)