

Look out, and lo a caravel at sea,  
A man that climbs the rock, and presently  
The Spaniard!

I did greet him, proud no more.  
He had braved durance, as I knew, ay death,  
To land on th' Island soil. In broken words  
Of English he did ask me how she fared.  
Quoth I, "She is dying, Spaniard; Rosamund  
My girl will die;" but he is fain, saith he,  
To talk with her, and all his mind to speak;  
I answer, "Ay, my whilome enemy,  
But she is dying." "Nay, now nay," quoth he,  
"So be she liveth," and he moved me yet  
For answer; then quoth I, "Come life, come death,  
What thou wilt, say."

Soon made we Rosamund  
Aware, she lying on the settle, wan  
As a lily in the shade, and while she not  
Believed for marvelling, comes he roundly in,  
The tall grave Spaniard, and with but one smile,  
One look of ruth upon her small pale face,  
All slowly as with unaccustom'd mouth,  
Betakes him to that English he hath conned,  
Setting the words out plain:

"Child! Rosamund!  
Love! An so please thee, I would be thy man.  
By all the saints will I be good to thee.  
Come."  
Come! what think you, would she come? Ay, ay.  
They love us, but our love is not their life.  
For the dark mariner's love lived Rosamund.  
Soon for his kiss she bloomed, smiled for his smile.

(Te Spaniard depare'eh en as th' Evangel saith  
And bore in 's bosom forth my golden sheaf.)  
She loved her father and her mother well,  
But loved the Spaniard better. It was sad  
To part, but she did part; and it was far  
To go, but she did go. The priest was brought,  
The ring was bless'd that bound my Rosamund,  
She sailed, and I shall never see her more.

One soweth and another reapeth. Ay,  
Too true! too true!

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ECHO AND THE FERRY.

Ay, Oliver! I was but seven, and he was eleven;  
He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed  
where I stood.  
They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only  
seven!  
I small guest at the farm); but he said, "Oh, a girl  
was no good!"  
So he whistled and went, he went over the stile to  
the wood.  
It was sad, it was sorrowful! Only a girl — only  
seven!  
At home in the dark London smoke I had not found  
it out.  
The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue  
birds flash'd about,  
And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they  
eleven?

I thought so. Yes, every one else was eleven —  
eleven!

So Oliver went, but the cowslips were tall at my  
feet,

And all the white orchard with fast-falling blossom  
was litter'd;

And under and over the branches those little birds  
twitter'd,

While hanging head downwards they scolded be-  
cause I was seven.

A pity. A very great pity. One should be eleven.  
But soon I was happy, the smell of the world was  
so sweet,

And I saw a round hole in an apple-tree rosy and  
old.

Then I knew! for I peeped, and I felt it was right  
they should scold!

Eggs small and eggs many. For gladness I broke  
into laughter;

And then some one else — oh, how softly! — came  
after, came after

With laughter — with laughter came after.

And no one was near us to utter that sweet mock-  
ing call,

That soon very tired sank low with a mystical fall.  
But this was the country — perhaps it was close  
under heaven;

Oh, nothing so likely; the voice might have come  
from it even.

I knew about heaven. But this was the country,  
of this

Light, blossom, and piping, and flashing of wings  
not at all.

Not at all. No. But one little bird was an easy  
forgiver:

She peeped, she drew near as I moved from her  
domicile small,

Then flashed down her hole like a dart — like a  
dart from the quiver.

And I waded atween the long grasses and felt it  
was bliss.

— So this was the country; clear dazzle of azure  
and shiver

And whisper of leaves, and a humming all over the  
tall

White branches, a humming of bees. And I came  
to the wall —

A little low wall — and looked over, and there was  
the river,

The lane that led on to the village, and then the  
sweet river

Clear shining and slow, she had far far to go from  
her snow;

But each rush gleamed a sword in the sunlight to  
guard her long flow,

And she murmur'd, methought, with a speech very  
soft — very low.

“The ways will be long, but the days will be long,”  
quothe the river,

“To me a long liver, long, long!” quothe the river  
— the river.

I dreamed of the country that night, of the orchard,  
the sky,

The voice that had mocked coming after and over  
 and under.  
 But at last — in a day or two namely — Eleven  
 and I  
 Were very fast friends, and to him I confided the  
 wonder.  
 He said that was Echo. “Was Echo a wise kind  
 of bee  
 That had learned how to laugh: could it laugh in  
 one’s ear and then fly  
 And laugh again yonder?” “No; Echo” — he  
 whispered it low —  
 “Was a woman, they said, but a woman whom no  
 one could see  
 And no one could find; and he did not believe it,  
 not he,  
 But he could not get near for the river that held us  
 asunder.  
 Yet I that had money — a shilling, a whole silver  
 shilling —  
 We might cross if I thought I would spend it.”  
 “Oh yes, I was willing” —  
 And we ran hand in hand, we ran down to the  
 ferry, the ferry,  
 And we heard how she mocked at the folk with a  
 voice clear and merry  
 When they called for the ferry; but oh! she was  
 very — was very  
 Swift-footed. She spoke and was gone; and when  
 Oliver cried,  
 “Hie over! hie over! you man of the ferry — the  
 ferry!”  
 By the still water’s side she was heard far and  
 wide — she replied

And she mocked in her voice sweet and merry,  
 “You man of the ferry,  
 You man of — you man of the ferry!”  
 “Hie over!” he shouted. The ferryman came at  
 his calling,  
 Across the clear reed-border’d river he ferried us  
 fast; —  
 Such a chase! Hand in hand, foot to foot, we ran  
 on; it surpass’d  
 All measure her doubling — so close, then so far  
 away falling,  
 Then gone, and no more. Oh! to see her but once  
 unaware,  
 And the mouth that had mocked, but we might not  
 (yet sure she was there!),  
 Nor behold her wild eyes and her mystical counte-  
 nance fair.  
 We sought in the wood, and we found the wood-  
 wren in her stead;  
 In the field, and we found but the cuckoo that  
 talked overhead;  
 By the brook, and we found the reed-sparrow deep-  
 nested, in brown —  
 Not Echo, fair Echo! for Echo, sweet Echo! was  
 flown.  
 So we came to the place where the dead people  
 wait till God call.  
 The church was among them, gray moss over roof,  
 over wall.  
 Very silent, so low. And we stood on a green  
 grassy mound

And looked in at a window, for Echo, perhaps, in  
 her round  
 Might have come in to hide there. But no; every  
 oak-carven seat  
 Was empty. We saw the great Bible — old, old,  
 very old,  
 And the parson's great Prayer-book beside it; we  
 heard the slow beat  
 Of the pendulum swing in the tower; we saw the  
 clear gold  
 Of a sunbeam float down to the aisle and then  
 waver and play  
 On the low chancel step and the railing, and Oliver  
 said,  
 "Look, Katie! look, Katie! when Lettice came  
 here to be wed  
 She stood where that sunbeam drops down, and all  
 white was her gown;  
 And she stepped upon flowers they strew'd for  
 her." Then quoth small Seven:  
 "Shall I wear a white gown and have flowers to  
 walk upon ever?"  
 All doubtful: "It takes a long time to grow up,"  
 quoth Eleven;  
 "You're so little, you know, and the church is so  
 old, it can never  
 Last on till you're tall." And in whispers — be-  
 cause it was old  
 And holy, and fraught with strange meaning, half  
 felt, but not told,  
 Full of old parsons' prayers, who were dead, of old  
 days, of old folk,  
 Neither heard nor beheld, but about us, in whis-  
 pers we spoke.

Then we went from it softly and ran hand in hand  
 to the strand,  
 While bleating of flocks and birds' piping made  
 sweeter the land.  
 And Echo came back e'en as Oliver drew to the  
 ferry  
 "O Katie!" "O Katie!" "Come on, then!" "Come  
 on, then!" "For, see,  
 The round sun, all red, lying low by the tree" —  
 "by the tree."  
 "By the tree." Ay, she mocked him again, with  
 her voice sweet and merry:  
 "Hie over!" "Hie over!" "You man of the  
 ferry" — "the ferry."  
 "You man of the ferry —  
 You man of — you man of — the ferry."

Ay, here — it was here that we woke her, the Echo  
 of old;  
 All life of that day seems an echo, and many times  
 told.  
 Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in  
 my white  
 To that little low church? and will Oliver meet  
 me anon?  
 Will it all seem an echo from childhood pass'd  
 over — pass'd on?  
 Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in  
 the dim failing light  
 I hear her! As then the child's voice clear and  
 high, sweet and merry  
 Now she mocks the man's tone with "Hie over!  
 Hie over the ferry!"

"And Katie." "And Katie." "Art out with the glow-worms to-night, My Katie?" "My Katie!" For gladness I break into laughter  
And tears. Then it all comes again as from far-away years  
Again, some one else — oh, how softly! — with laughter comes after,  
Comes after — with laughter comes after.

PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

*A Schoolroom.*

SCHOOLMASTER (*not certificated*), VICAR, and CHILD.

Vicar. Why did you send for me? I hope all's right?

Schoolmaster. Well, sir, we thought this end o' the room was dark.

V. Indeed! So 'tis. There's my new study lamp —

S. 'Twould stand, sir, well beside yon laurel wreath.

Shall I go fetch it?

V. Do, we must not fail.

Bring candles also.

[*Exit* SCHOOLMASTER. VICAR *arranges chairs.*

Now, small six years old,  
And why may you be here?

Child. I'm helping father;  
But, father, why d' you take such pains?

V. Sweet soul,  
That's what I'm for!

C. What, and for nothing else?

V. Yes! I'm to bring thee up to be a man.

C. And what am I for?

V. There, I'm busy now.

C. Am I to bring you up to be a child?

V. Perhaps! Indeed, I have heard it said thou art.

C. Then when may I begin?

V. I'm busy, I say.  
Begin to-morrow an thou canst, my son,  
And mind to do it well.

[*Exit* VICAR and CHILD.]

*Enter a group of women, and some children.*

Mrs. Thorpe. Fine lot o' lights!

Mrs. Jillifer. Should be! Would folk put on their Sunday best  
I' the week unless they looked to have it seen?  
What, you here, neighbor!

Mrs. Smith. Ay, you may say that.  
Old madam called; said she, "My son would feel  
So sorry if you did not come," and slipped  
The penny in my hand, she did; said I,  
"Ma'am, that's not it. In short, some say your  
last

Was worth the penny and more. I know a man,  
A sober man, who said, and stuck to it,

Worth a good twopence. But I'm strange, I'm shy."  
"We hope you'll come for once," said she. In short,