

Thomas Percy (1729-1811)

1 *The Child of Elle*

On yonder hill a castle standes  
With walles and towres bedight,  
And yonder lives the Child of Elle,  
A younge and comely knighte.

The Child of Elle to his garden wente, 5  
And stood at his garden pale,  
Whan, lo! he beheld fair Emmelines page  
Come trippinge downe the dale.

The Child of Elle he hyed him thence,  
Y-wis he stode not stille, 10  
And soone he mette faire Emmelines page  
Come climbing up the hille.

'Nowe Christe thee save, thou little foot-page,  
Now Christe thee save and see!  
Oh telle me how does thy ladye gaye, 15  
And what may thy tydinges bee?'

'My lady shee is all woe-begone,  
And the teares they falle from her eyne;  
And aye she laments the deadlye feude  
Betweene her house and thine. 20

And here shee sends thee a silken scarfe  
Bedewde with many a teare,  
And biddes thee sometimes thinke on her,  
Who loved thee so deare.

And here shee sends thee a ring of golde 25  
The last boone thou mayst have,  
And biddes thee weare it for her sake,

Whan she is layde in grave.

For, ah! her gentle heart is broke,  
And in grave soone must shee bee, 30  
Sith her father hath chose her a new new love,  
And forbidde her to think of thee.

Her father hath brought her a carlish knight,  
Sir John of the north countraye,  
And within three dayes shee must him wedde, 35  
Or he vowes he will her slaye.'

'Nowe hye thee backe, thou little foot-page,  
And greet thy ladye from mee,  
And telle her that I her owne true love  
Will dye, or sette her free. 40

Nowe hye thee backe, thou little foot-page,  
And let thy fair ladye know  
This night will I bee at her bowre-windowe,  
Betide me weale or woe.'

The boye he tripped, the boye he ranne, 45  
He neither stint ne stayd  
Untill he came to fair Emmelines bowre,  
Whan kneeling downe he sayd,

'O ladye, I 've been with thy own true love,  
And he greets thee well by mee; 50  
This night will he bee at thy bowre-windowe,  
And dye or sette thee free.'

Nowe daye was gone, and night was come,  
And all were fast asleepe,  
All save the ladye Emmeline, 55  
Who sate in her bowre to weepe:

And soone shee heard her true love's voice

Lowe whispering at the walle,  
'Awake, awake, my deare ladyè,  
Tis I, thy true love, call. 60

Awake, awake, my ladye deare,  
Come, mount this faire palfràye:  
This ladder of ropes will lette thee downe,  
Ile carrye thee hence awaye.'

'Nowe nay, nowe nay, thou gentle knight, 65  
Nowe nay, this may not bee;  
For aye shold I tint my maiden fame,  
If alone I should wend with thee.'

'O ladye, thou with a knyghte so true  
Mayst safelye wend alone, 70  
To my ladye mother I will thee bringe,  
Where marriage shall make us one.'

'My father he is a baron bolde,  
Of lynage proude and hye;  
And what would he saye if his daughtèr 75  
Awaye with a knight should fly?

Ah! well I wot, he never would rest,  
Nor his meate should doe him no goode,  
Until he had slayne thee, Child of Elle,  
And seene thy deare hearts bloode.' 80

'O ladye, wert thou in thy saddle sette,  
And a little space him fro,  
I would not care for thy cruel fathèr,  
Nor the worst that he could doe.

O ladye, wert thou in thy saddle sette, 85  
And once without this walle,  
I would not care for thy cruel fathèr,  
Nor the worst that might befallè.'

Faire Emmeline sighed, fair Emmeline wept,  
 And aye her heart was woe: 90  
 At length he seized her lilly-white hand,  
 And downe the ladder he drewe:

And thrice he clasped her to his breste,  
 And kist her tenderlie:  
 The tears that fell from her fair eyes, 95  
 Ranne like the fountayne free.

Hee mounted himselfe on his steede so talle,  
 And her on a fair palfràye,  
 And slung his bugle about his necke,  
 And roundlye they rode away. 100

All this beheard her owne damsèlle,  
 In her bed whereas shee ley,  
 Quoth shee, 'My lord shall knowe of this,  
 Soe I shall have golde and fee.

Awake, awake, thou baron bolde! 105  
 Awake, my noble dame!  
 Your daughter is fledde with the Child of Elle,  
 To doe the deede of shame.'

The baron he woke, the baron he rose,  
 And called his merrye men all: 110  
 'And come thou forth, Sir John the knighte,  
 Thy ladye is carried to thrall.'

Faire Emmeline scant had ridden a mile,  
 A mile forth of the towne,  
 When she was aware of her fathers men 115  
 Come galloping over the downe:

And foremost came the carlish knight,  
 Sir John of the north countràye:

‘Nowe stop, nowe stop, thou false traitoure,  
Nor carry that ladye awaye. 120

For she is come of hye lineàge,  
And was of a ladye borne,  
And ill it beseems thee, a false churl’s sonne  
To carrye her hence to scorne.’

‘Nowe loud thou lyeest, Sir John the knight, 125  
Nowe thou doest lye of mee;  
A knight mee gott, and a ladye me bore,  
Soe never did none by thee.

But light nowe downe, my ladye faire,  
Light downe, and hold my steed, 130  
While I and this discourteous knighte  
Doe trye this arduous deede.

But light now downe, my dear ladyè,  
Light downe, and hold my horse;  
While I and this discourteous knight 135  
Doe trye our valour’s force.’

Fair Emmeline sighed, fair Emmeline wept,  
And aye her heart was woe,  
While twixt her love and the carlish knight  
Past many a baleful blowe. 140

The Child of Elle hee fought soe well,  
As his weapon he waved amaine,  
That soone he had slaine the carlish knight,  
And layd him upon the plaine.

And nowe the baron, and all his men 145  
Full fast approached nye:  
Ah! what may ladye Emmeline doe?  
Twere nowe no boote to flye.

Her lover he put his horne to his mouth,  
And blew both loud and shrill, 150  
And soone he saw his owne merry men  
Come ryding over the hill.

‘Nowe hold thy hand, thou bold baròn,  
I pray thee hold thy hand,  
Nor ruthless rend two gentle hearts, 155  
Fast knit in true love’s band.

Thy daughter I have dearly loved  
Full long and many a day;  
But with such love as holy kirke  
Hath freelye sayd wee may. 160

O give consent, shee may be mine,  
And blesse a faithfull paire:  
My lands and livings are not small,  
My house and lineage faire:

My mother she was an earl’s daughtèr, 165  
And a noble knyght my sire —— ’  
The baron he frowned, and turn’d away  
With mickle dole and ire.

Fair Emmeline sighed, faire Emmeline wept,  
And did all trembling stand: 170  
At lengthe she sprang upon her knee,  
And held his lifted hand.

‘Pardon, my lorde and father deare,  
This faire yong knyght and mee:  
Trust me, but for the carlish knyght, 175  
I never had fled from thee.

Oft have you called your Emmeline  
Your darling and your joye;  
O let not then your harsh resolves

Your Emmeline destroye.' 180

The baron he stroakt his dark-brown cheeke,  
 And turned his heade asyde  
 To whipe awaye the starting teare,  
 He proudly strave to hyde.

In deepe revolving thought he stoode, 185  
 And mused a little space;  
 Then raised faire Emmeline from the grounde,  
 With many a fond embrace.

'Here take her, Child of Elle,' he sayd,  
 And gave her lillye white hand; 190  
 'Here take my deare and only child,  
 And with her half my land:

Thy father once mine honour wrongde  
 In dayes of youthful pride;  
 Do thou the injurye repayre 195  
 In fondnesse for thy bride.

And as thou love her, and hold her deare,  
 Heaven prosper thee and thine:  
 And nowe my blessing wend wi' thee,  
 My lovelye Emmeline.' 200

1765

(From Thomas Percy, ed. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Vol. 1. With Memoir and Critical Dissertation by the Rev. George Gilfillan. Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1858. A rpt. entire from Percy's last edition of 1794)