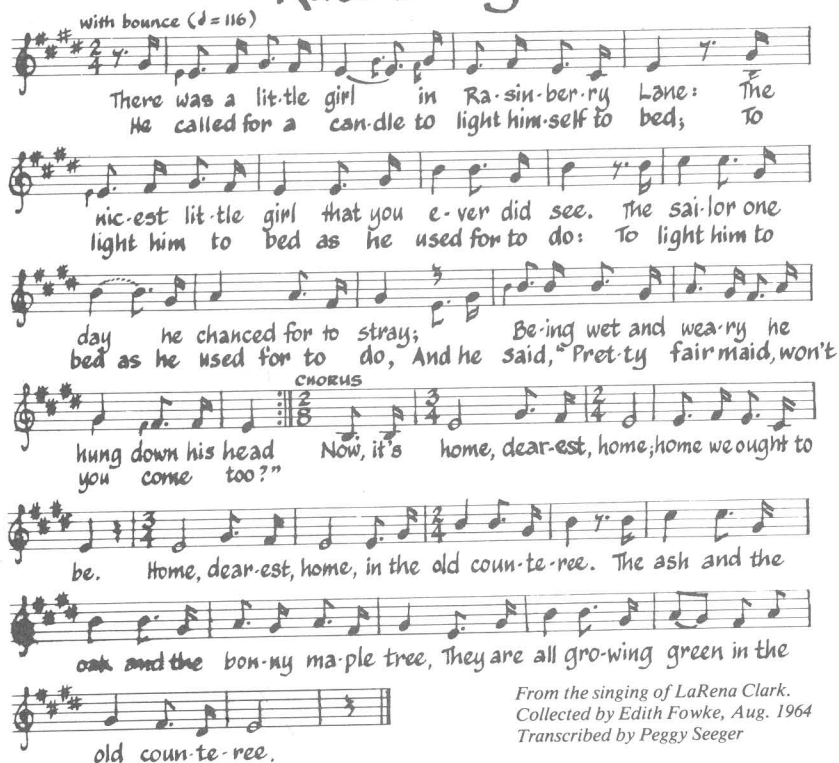


# Rasinberry Lane

With bounce ( $\text{♩} = 116$ )



There was a lit-tle girl in Ra-sin-ber-ry Lane: The  
He called for a can-dle to light him-self to bed; To  
nic-est lit-tle girl that you e-ver did see. The sai-lor one  
light him to bed as he used for to do: To light him to  
day he chanced for to stray; Be-ing wet and wea-ry he  
bed as he used for to do, And he said, "Pret-ty fair maid, won't  
hung down his head you come too?" Now, it's home, dear-est, home; home we ought to  
be. Home, dear-est, home, in the old coun-te-ree. The ash and the  
oak and the bon-ny ma-ple tree, They are all gro-wing green in the  
old coun-te-ree.

CHORUS

From the singing of LaRena Clark.  
Collected by Edith Fowke, Aug. 1964  
Transcribed by Peggy Seeger

There was a little girl in Rasinberry Lane,  
The nicest little girl that you ever did see.  
The sailor one day he chanced for to stray;  
Being wet and weary, he hung down his head.  
He called for a candle to light himself to bed,  
To light him to bed as he used for to do;  
To light him to bed as he used for to do,  
And he said, "Pretty fair maid, won't you come too?"

## Chorus:

Now it's home, dearest, home; home we ought to be.  
Home, dearest, home, in the old countree.  
The ash and the oak and the bonny maple tree,  
They are all growing green in the old countree.

The maid being bashful, she answered him no.  
Two handfuls of gold in her apron he did throw,  
Saying, "This to you, my pretty fair maid, oh this to you I give  
If you promise to love me as long as you live."  
She, like a foolish girl, thinking it no harm,  
Jumped into bed for to keep the sailor warm,  
Now what they done there I will never tell you here,  
But they wished that the night was as long as a year.

Early next morning the sailor he arose,  
 Hands in his pockets a-counting out his dough,  
 Saying, "Take this, my darling, for what you've said and done,  
 Leaving you a little daughter, perhaps a little son.  
 If it be a daughter, she can stay at home with thee;  
 If it be a son, you can send him out to sea.  
 With bell-bottomed pants and a suit of navy blue  
 He can climb the navy mast like his daddy used to do.

This tale of a sailor and a fair maid, originally known as "Rosemary Lane," has long been popular both on shore and at sea, but the number of published versions is somewhat scanty because, as Miss Dean-Smith noted, "The text of 'Rosemary Lane' was considered too indelicate for collections offered to the public at the turn of the century."

The ballad has taken several fairly distinct forms. Between 1893 and 1913 English collectors noted it half a dozen times in two forms: as a straight ballad without a refrain, usually beginning "When I was in service in Rosemary Lane"; and also with the "oak and ash" refrain, usually called "Home, Dearie, Home," and beginning with the young sailor asking for "a candle to light him to bed." The refrain was borrowed from an old Northumberland song, "The North Country Maid," which told of the maid's homesickness when she left her home to go down to London, and at sea English tars crossed the two to create a song telling of a sailor's longing to see his wife and baby. In this widely known form, the only similarity to the "Rosemary Lane" ballad is a stanza telling how the baby will grow up to be a sailor like his dad. But seamen also continued to sing something closer to the original, which developed into the form known as "Bell-Bottomed Trousers."

Mrs. Clark's version, which came from her Granddad Watson, is unusual because of its double stanza form, and because it combined the old "Rosemary Lane" opening with the "oak and ash" refrain.

The first reported British version of "Rosemary Lane" published in the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* in 1918 has five four-line stanzas of which all but stanza 4 compare roughly to lines in Mrs. Clark's version. Several other English versions contain a number of stanzas that compare closely, including the rather rare reference to throwing gold into her apron, but none arranges the lines in just this way.

The refrain always follows much the same pattern, but there are many variations in the trees named. "The oak and the ash and the bonny ellow tree" is common; another has "the ivy and the oak and the bonny willow tree"; and this Ontario version brings in the maple tree to give it a Canadian touch.

For British references see Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), page 166. For American versions see Laws, *American ballads from British Broad-sides*, K43, p. 162, and add Horace P. Beck, *Folklore of Maine*, pp. 183-184, and Ed Cray, *The Erotic Muse*, pp. 32-33 and 160-61. Stan Hugill gives three sea versions in *Shanties from the Seven Seas*, pp. 498-501. Traditional recorded versions are found on Folkways FA 2309, *Old Love Songs and Ballads from the Big Laurel, North Carolina*, and Topic 12TS 375, *Sing, Say, and Play*. Mrs. Clark's version is on her record, *Family Legend in Song*, Clark LCS 106.

Edith Fowke