

The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play (c. 1400-1450)¹
By the Wakefield Master

CHARACTERS

- 1ST SHEPHERD
- 2ND SHEPHERD
- 3RD SHEPHERD
- MAC, *the Sheep-stealer*
- MAC'S WIFE, GILL
- MARY
- THE CHILD CHRIST
- AN ANGEL

THE WAKEFIELD SECOND NATIVITY PLAY

1st Shepherd. Lord! what, these weathers are cold, and I am ill happed;
I am near hand-dold, so long have I napped;
My legs bend and fold, my fingers are chapped,
It is not as I would, for I am all lapped

In sorrow.

In storms and tempest,
Now in the east, now in the west,
Woe is him has never rest,

Mid day nor morrow.

But we silly shepherds, that walk upon the moor,
In faith, we are near hands out of the door;
No wonder, as it stands, if we be poor,
For the tilth of our lands lies fallow as the floor,
We are so lamed,
So taxed and shamed,
We are made hand-tamed,
With these gentlery-men.

Thus they rieve us of rest, Our Lady them wary,
These men that are lord-fest, they cause the plough tarry.
That men say is for the best, we find it contrary,
Thus are husbands opprest, in point to miscarry,
In life.

Thus hold they us under,
Thus they bring us in blunder,
It were great wonder,
And ever should we thrive.

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For may he get a paint sleeve, or a brooch now on days,
Woe is he that shall grieve, or once again says,
Dare no man him relieve, what mast'ry he has,
And yet may none believe one word that he says--

No letter.

He can make purveyance,
With boast and bragance,
And all through maintenance,
Of men that are greater.

There shall come a swain, as proud as a po,
He must borrow my wain, my plough also,
Then I am full fain to grant or he go.
Thus live we in pain, anger, and woe,

By night and day;

He must have if he longéd
If I should forgang it,
I were better be hangéd

Than once say him nay.

It does me good, as I walk thus by mine own,
Of this world for to talk in manner of moan
To my sheep will I stalk and hearken anon
There abide on a balk, or sit on a stone

Full soon.

For I trow, pardie!

True men if they be,

We get more company

Or it be noon.

2nd Shepherd. "Beniste" and "Dominus!" what may this bemean?

Why fares this world thus, oft have we not seen.

Lord, these weathers are spitous, and the weather full keen;

And the frost so hideous they water mine een,

No lie.

Now in dry, now in wet,

Now in snow, now in sleet,

When my shoon freeze to my feet

It is not all easy.

But as far as I ken, or yet as I go,

We silly wed-men dree mickle woe;

We have sorrow then and then, it falls often so,

Silly capyl, our hen, both to and fro

She cackles,

But begin she to croak,

To groan or to cluck,

Woe is him, say of our cock,

For he is in the shackles.

These men that are wed, have not all their will,
When they are full hard sted, they sigh full still;
God wait they are led full hard and full ill,
In bower nor in bed they say not there till
 This tide.
My part have I found,
My lesson is learn'd,
Woe is him that is bound,
 For he must abide.
But now late in our lives, a marvel to me,
That I think my heart rives, such wonders to see,
What that destiny drives it should so be,
Some men will have two wives, and some men three,
 In store.
Some are woe that have any;
But so far ken I,
Woe is he who has many,
 For he feels it sore.
But young men of wooing, for God that you bought,
Be well ware of wedding, and think in your thought
"Had I wist" is a thing it serves ye of nought;
Mickle still mourning has wedding home brought,
 And griefs,
With many a sharp shower,
For thou may catch in an hour
That shall serve thee full sour
 As long as thou lives.
For as read I epistle, I have one to my fear
As sharp as a thistle, as rough as a brere.
She is browed like a bristle with a sour lenten cheer;
Had she once wet her whistle she could sing full clear
 Her pater-noster.
She is as great as a whale,
She has a gallon of gall;
By him that died for us all!
 I would I had run till I lost her.

1st Shepherd. God look over the row, full deafly ye stand.

2nd Shepherd. Yea, the devil in thy maw!--so tariand,
Saw thou aught now of Daw?

1st Shepherd. Yea, on a lea land
Heard I him blow, he comes here at hand,
 Not far;
Stand still.

2nd Shepherd. Why?

1st Shepherd. For he comes here, hope I.

2nd Shepherd. He will make us both a lie,
But if we beware.

3rd Shepherd. Christ's cross me speed, and Saint Nicholas!

Thereof had I need, it is worse than it was.

Whoso could take heed, and let the world pass,

It is ever in dread and brittle as glass,

And slithers,

This world fared never so,

With marvels mo and mo,

Now in weal, now in woe,

And all things withers.

Was never since Noah's flood such floods seen,

Winds and rains so rude, and storms so keen,

Some stammered, some stood in doubt, as I ween,

Now God turn all to good, I say as I mean,

For ponder.

These floods so they drown

Both in fields and in town,

They bear all down,

And that is a wonder.

We that walk in the nights, our cattle to keep,

We see sudden sights, when other men sleep:

Yet methinks my heart lights, I see shrews peep,

Ye are two, all wights, I will give my sheep

A turn.

But full ill have I meant,

As I walk on this bent,

I may lightly repent,

My toes if I spurn.

Ah, sir, God you save, and master mine!

A drink fain would I have and somewhat to dine.

1st Shepherd. Christ's curs, my knave, thou art a lazy hyne.

2nd Shepherd. What, the boy list rave. Abide until syne

We have made it.

I'll thrift on thy pate!

Though the shrew came late

Yet is he in state

To dine if he had it.

3rd Shepherd. Such servants as I, that sweats and swinks,
Eats our bread full dry, and that me forthinks;
We are oft wet and weary when master men winks,
Yet comes full lately both dinners and drinks,
 But neatly.
Both our dame and our sire,
When we have run in the mire,
They can nip at our hire,
 And pay us full lately.
But hear my truth, master, for the fare that ye make
I shall do thereafter work, as I take;
I shall do a little, sir, and strive and still lack,
For yet lay my supper never on my stomach
 In fields.
Whereto should I threap?
With my staff can I leap,
And men say "light cheap
 Letherly for yields."

1st Shepherd. Thou wert an ill lad, to ride on wooing
With a man that had but little of spending.

2nd Shepherd. Peace, boy!--I bade: no more jangling,
Or I shall make thee afraid, by the heaven's king!
 With thy gawds;
Where are our sheep, boy, we scorn?

3rd Shepherd. Sir, this same day at morn,
I them left in the corn,
 When they rang lauds;
They have pasture good, they cannot go wrong.

1st Shepherd. That is right by the rood, these nights are long,
Yet I would, or we yode, one gave us a song.

2nd Shepherd. So I thought as I stood, to mirth us among.

3rd Shepherd. I grant.

1st Shepherd. Let me sing the tenory.

2nd Shepherd. And I the treble so high.

3rd Shepherd. Then the mean falls to me;
 Let see how ye chaunt.

[Mac enters, with a cloak thrown over his smock.]

Mac. Now, Lord, for thy names seven, that made both moon and starns
Well more than I can even: thy will, Lord, of my thorns;
I am all uneven, that moves oft my horns,
Now would God I were in heaven, for there weep no bairns
So still.

1st Shepherd. Who is that pipes so poor?

Mac. Would God ye knew how I fare!
Lo, a man that walks on the moor,
And has not all his will.

2nd Shepherd. Mac, where hast thou gone? Tell us tidings.

3rd Shepherd. Is he come? Then each one take heed to his things.

[Takes his cloak from him.]

Mac. What, I am a yeoman, I tell you, of the king;
The self and the same, sent from a great lording,
And sich.
Fy on you, get thee hence,
Out of my presence,
I must have reverence,
Why, who be ich?

1st Shepherd. Why make ye it so quaint? Mac, ye do wrong.

2nd Shepherd. But, Mac, list, ye saint? I trow that ye sang.

3rd Shepherd. I trow the shrew can paint, the devil might him hang!

Mac. I shall make complaint, and make you all to thwang.
At a word,
And tell even how ye doth.

1st Shepherd. But, Mac, is that sooth?
Now take out that southern tooth,
And set in a tord.

2nd Shepherd. Mac, the devil in your ee, a stroke would I lend you.

3rd Shepherd. Mac, know ye not me? By God, I could tell you.

Mac. God look you all three, methought I had seen you.
Ye are a fair company.

1st Shepherd. Can ye now moan you?

2nd Shepherd. Shrew, jape!
Thus late as thou goes,
What will men suppose?
And thou hast an ill noise
Of stealing of sheep.

Mac. And I am true as steel all men wait,
But a sickness I feel, that holds me full haytt,
My belly fares not well, it is out of its state.

3rd Shepherd. Seldom lies the devil dead by the gate.

Mac. Therefore
Full sore am I and ill,
If I stand stock still;
I eat not a nedyll
This month and more.

1st Shepherd. How fares thy wife? By my hood, how fares she?

Mac. Lies weltering! by the rood! by the fire, lo!
And a house full of brood, she drinks well too,
Ill speed other good that she will do;
But so
Eats as fast as she can,
And each year that comes to man,
She brings forth a lakan,
And some years two.
But were I not more gracious, and richer by far,
I were eaten out of house, and of harbour,
Yet is she a foul dowse, if ye come near.
There is none that trows, nor knows, a war
Than ken I.
Now will ye see what I proffer,
To give all in my coffer
To-morrow next to offer,
Her head mass-penny.

2nd Shepherd. I wot so forwaked is none in this shire:
I would sleep if I taked less to my hire.

3rd Shepherd. I am cold and naked, and would have a fire.

1st Shepherd. I am weary for-raked, and run in the mire.
Wake thou!

2nd Shepherd. Nay, I will lie down-by,
For I must sleep truly.

3rd Shepherd. As good a man's son was I
As any of you.
But, Mac, come hither, between us shalt thou lie.

Mac. Then might I stay you bedene: of that ye would say,--
No dread.
From my head to my toe
Mantis tuas commendo,
Pontio Pilato.
Christ's cross me speed,

[He rises, the shepherds sleeping, and says:

Now were time for a man, that lacks what he wold,
To stalk privately then into a fold,
And namely to work then, and be not too bold,
He might abide the bargain, if it were told
At the ending.
Now were time for to revel;
But he needs good counsel
That fain would fare well,
And has but little spending.

[Mac works a spell on them.

But about you a circle, as round as a moon,
Till I have done that I will, till that it be noon,
That ye lie stone-still, till that I have done,
And I shall say there till of good words a foyne
On height;
Over your heads my hand I lift,
Out go your eyes, fore to do your sight,
But yet I must make better shift,
And it be right.
What, Lord? they sleep hard! that may ye all hear;
Was I never a shepherd, but now will I leer
If the flock be scared, yet shall I nap near,

Who draws hitherward, now mends our cheer,
From sorrow:
A fat sheep I dare say,
A good fleece dare I lay,
Eft white when I may,
But this will I borrow.

[*He steals a sheep and goes home.*]

Mac (at his own door). How, Gill, art thou in? Get us some light.

His Wife. Who makes such din this time of night?
I am set for to spin: I hope not I might
Rise a penny to win: I shrew them on height.
So fares
A housewife that has been
To be raised thus between:
There may no note be seen
For such small chares.

Mac. Good wife, open the hek. See'st thou not what I bring?

Wife. I may let thee draw the sneck. Ah! come in, my sweeting.

Mac. Yea, thou dost not reck of my long standing.

Wife. By thy naked neck, thou art like for to hang.

Mac. Go away:
I am worthy of my meat,
For in a strait can I get
More than they that swinck and sweat
All the long day,
Thus it fell to my lot, Gill, I had such grace.

Wife. It were a foul blot to be hanged for the case.

Mac. I have scaped, Jelott, oft as hard as glass.

Wife. "But so long goes the pot to the water," men says,
"At last comes it home broken."

Mac. Well know I the token,
But let it never be spoken;
But come and help fast.

I would he were flayn; I list we'll eat:
This twelvemonth was I not so fain of one sheep-meat.

Wife. Come they if he be slain, and hear the sheep bleat?

Mac. Then might I be ta'en: that were a cold sweat.
Go bar
The gate door.

Wife. Yes, Mac,
For and they come at thy back.

Mac. Then might I pay for all the pack:
The devil of them war!

Wife. A good bowrde have I spied, since thou can none:
Here shall we him hide, till they be gone;
In my cradle abide. Let me alone,
And I shall lie beside in childbed and groan.

Mac. Thou red?
And I shall say thou wast light
Of a knave child this night.

Wife. Now well is my day bright,
That ever I was bred.
This is a good guise and a far cast;
Yet a woman's advice helps at the last.
I care never who spies: again go thou fast.

Mac. But I come or they rise; else blows a cold blast--
I will go sleep. [*Mac goes back to the field.*]
Yet sleep all this meny,
And I shall go stalk privily,
As it had never been I
That carried their sheep.

1st Shepherd. *Resurrex à mortrius:* have hold my hand.
Judas carnas dominus, I may not well stand:
My foot sleeps, by Jesus, and I water fastand!
I thought that we laid us full near England.

2nd Shepherd. Ah ye!
Lord, how I have slept weel!
As fresh as an eel,

As light I me feel
As leaf on a tree.

3rd Shepherd. Benste! be herein! So my head quakes
My heart is out of skin, what so it makes.
Who makes all this din? So my brow aches,
To the door will I win. Hark fellows, wakes!
We were four:
See ye anything of Mac now?

1st Shepherd. We were up ere thou.

2nd Shepherd. Man, I give God a vow,
Yet heed he nowhere.

3rd Shepherd. Methought he was wrapped in a wolf's-skin.

1st Shepherd. So are many happed, now namely within.

2nd Shepherd. When we had long napped; methought with a gin
A fat sheep he trapped, but he made no din.

3rd Shepherd. Be still:
Thy dream makes thee wood:
It is but phantom, by the rood.

1st Shepherd. Now God turn all to good,
If it be his will.

2nd Shepherd. Rise, Mac, for shame! thou ly'st right long.

Mac. Now Christ, his holy name be us amang,
What is this? for Saint James!--I may not well gang.
I trust I be the same. Ah! my neck has lain wrang
Enough
Mickle thank, since yester-even
Now, by Saint Stephen!
I was flayed with a sweven,--
My heart out of slough.
I thought Gill began to croak, and travail full sad,
Well nigh at the first cock,--of a young lad,
For to mend our flock: then be I never glad.
To have two on my rock,--more than ever I had.
Ah, my head!
A house full of young tharmes,
The devil knock out their harnes!

Woe is he has many bairns,
And thereto little bread.
I must go home, by your leave, to Gill as I thought.
I pray you look my sleeve, that I steal nought:
I am loth you to grieve, or from you take aught.

3rd Shepherd. Go forth, ill might thou chefe, now would I we sought,
This morn,
That we had all our store.

1st Shepherd. But I will go before,
Let us meet.

2nd Shepherd. Whor?

3rd Shepherd. At the crooked thorn.

Mac (at his own door again). Undo this door! who is here? How long shall I stand?

Wife. Who makes such a stir?--Now walk in the wenyand.

Mac. Ah, Gill, what cheer?--It is I, Mac, your husband.

His Wife. Then may we be here,--the devil in a band,
Sir Gile.
Lo, he commys with a lot,
As he were holden in the throat.
I may not sit, work or not
A hand long while.

Mac. Will ye hear what fare she makes--to get her a glose,
And do naught but laces--and close her toes.

Wife. Why, who wanders, who wakes,--who comes, who goes?
Who brews, who bakes? Who makes for me this hose?
And then
It is ruth to behold,
Now in hot, now in cold,
Full woful is the household
That wants a woman.
But what end hast thou made with the herds, Mac?

Mac. The last word that they said,--when I turned my back,
They would look that they had--their sheep all the pack.
I hope they will not be well paid,--when they their sheep lack.
Perdie!

But howso the game goes,
To me they will suppose,
And make a foul noise,
 And cry out upon me.
But thou must do as thou hight,

Wife. I accord me thertylle.
I shall swaddle him right in my cradle.
If it were a greater slight, yet could I help till.
I will lie down straight. Come hap me.

Mac. I will.

Wife. Behind,
Come Coll and his marrow,
They will nip us full narrow.

Mac. But I may cry out "Harro!"
 The sheep if they find.

Wife. Hearken aye when they call: they will come anon.
Come and make ready all, and sing by thine own,
Sing "Lullay!" thou shall, for I must groan,
And cry out by the wall on Mary and John,
 For sore.
Sing "Lullay" full fast
When thou hears at the last;
And but I play a false cast
 Trust me no more.

[*Re-enter the Three Shepherds.*]

3rd Shepherd. Ah, Coll! good morn:--why sleepest thou not?

1st Shepherd. Alas, that ever was I born!--we have a foul blot.
A fat wether have we lorne.

3rd Shepherd. Marry, Godys forbot!

2nd Shepherd. Who should do us that scorn? That were a foul spot.

1st Shepherd. Some shrew.
I have sought with my dogs,
All Horbery shrogs,
And of fifteen hogs
 Found I but one ewe.

3rd Shepherd. Now trust me if you will;--by Saint Thomas of Kent!
Either Mac or Gill--was at that assent.

1st Shepherd. Peace, man, be still;--I saw when he went.
Thou slander'st him ill; thou ought to repent.
Good speed.

2nd Shepherd. Now as ever might I thee,
If I should even here dee,
I would say it were he,
That did that same deed.

3rd Shepherd. Go we thither I rede,--and run on our feet.
May I never eat bread,--the truth till I wit.

1st Shepherd. Nor drink, in my heed,--with him till I meet.

2nd Shepherd. I will rest in no stead, till that I him greet,
My brother
One I will hight:
Till I see him in sight
Shall I never sleep one night
There I do another.

3rd Shepherd. Will ye hear how they hack,--Our Sire! list, how they croon!

1st Shepherd. Hard I never none crack,--so clear out of tune.
Call on him.

2nd Shepherd. Mac! undo your door soon.

Mac. Who is it that spoke,--as it were noon?
On loft,
Who is that I say?

3rd Shepherd. Good fellows! were it day?

Mac. As far as ye may,--
Good, speak ye soft!
Over a sick woman's head,--that is ill mate ease,
I had liefer be dead,--or she had any disease.

Wife. Go to another stead; I may not well queasse
Each foot that ye tread--goes near make me sneeze
So he!

1st Shepherd. Tell us, Mac, if ye may,
How fare ye, I say?

Mac. But are ye in this town to-day?
Now how fare ye?
Ye have run in the mire, and are wet yit:
I shall make you a fire, if ye will sit.
A horse would I hire; think ye on it.
Well quit is my hire, my dream--this is it.
A season.
I have bairns if ye knew,
Well more than enew,
But we must drink as we brew,
And that is but reason.
I would ye dined e'er ye yode: methink that ye sweat.

2nd Shepherd. Nay, neither mends our mode, drink nor meat.

Mac. Why, sir, ails you aught, but good?

3rd Shepherd. Yes, our sheep that we gat,
Are stolen as they yode. Our loss is great.

Mac. Sirs, drinkýs!
Had I been there,
Some should have bought it full dear.

1st Shepherd. Marry, some men trows that ye were,
And that us forethinkýs.

2nd Shepherd. Mac, some men trows that it should be ye.

3rd Shepherd. Either ye or your spouse; so say we.

Mac. Now if ye have suspouse to Gill or to me,
Come and rip our house, and then may ye see
Who had her.
If I any sheep got,
Either cow or stot,
And Gill, my wife rose not
Here since she laid her.
As I am both true and leal, to God here I pray,
That this be the first meal, I shall eat this day.

1st Shepherd. Mac, as I have weal, arise thee, I say!
"He learned timely to steal, that could not say nay."

Wife. I swelt.
Out thieves from my once!
Ye come to rob us for the nonce.

Mac. Hear ye not how she groans?
Your heart should melt.

Wife. Out thieves, from my bairn! Nigh him not thore.

Mac. Knew ye how she had farne, your hearts would be sore.
Ye do wrong, I you warn, that thus commys before
To a woman that has farn; but I say no more.

Wife. Ah, my middle!
I pray to God so mild,
If ever I you beguiled,
That I eat this child,
That lies in this cradle.

Mac. Peace, woman, for God's pain, and cry not so:
Thou spill'st thy brain, and mak'st me full woe.

2nd Shepherd. I know our sheep be slain, what find ye too?

3rd Shepherd. All work we in vain: as well may we go.
But hatters.
I can find no flesh,
Hard nor nesh,
Salt nor fresh,
But two tome platters:
No cattle but this, tame nor wild,
None, as have I bliss; as loud as he smiled.

Wife. No, so God me bliss, and give me joy of my child.

1st Shepherd. We have markèd amiss: I hold us beguiled.

2nd Shepherd. Sir, done!
Sir, our lady him save,
Is your child a knave?

Mac. Any lord might him have
This child to his son.
When he wakens he skips, that joy is to see.

3rd Shepherd. In good time, be his steps, and happy they be!
But who was his gossips, tell now to me!

Mac. So fair fall their lips!

1st Shepherd (aside). Hark now, a lee!

Mac. So God them thank,
Parkin, and Gibbon Waller, I say,
And gentle John Horne, in good fay,
He made all the garray,
With the great shank.

2nd Shepherd. Mac, friends will we be, for we are all one.

Mac. Why! now I hold for me, for help get I none.
Farewell all three: all glad were ye gone.

3rd Shepherd. Fair words may there be, but love there is none.

1st Shepherd. Gave ye the child anything?

2nd Shepherd. I trust not one farthing.

3rd Shepherd. Fast again will I fling,
Abide ye me there. [*He returns to Mac's cot.*]
Mac, take it to no grief, if I come to thy barn.

Mac. Nay, thou dost me great reprieve, and foul hast thou farne.

3rd Shepherd. The child will it not grieve, that little day starn.
Mac, with your leave, let me give your bairn,
But sixpence.

Mac. Nay, go 'way: he sleepys.

3rd Shepherd. Methink he peepys.

Mac. When he wakens he weepys.
I pray you go hence.

3rd Shepherd. Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout.
What the devil is this? He has a long snout.

1st Shepherd. He is marked amiss. We wait ill about.

2nd Shepherd. Ill spun weft, I wis, aye cometh foul out;
Aye so;
He is like to our sheep.

3rd Shepherd. How, Gib, may I peep?

1st Shepherd. I trow, kind will creep,
Where it may not go.

2nd Shepherd. This was a quaint gaud, and a far cast
It was a high fraud.

3rd Shepherd. Yea, sirs, was't.
Let burn this bawd and bind her fast.
A false skawd hangs at the last;
So shall thou.
Will ye see how they swaddle
His four feet in the middle?
Saw I never in a cradle
A hornëd lad e'er now.

Mac. Peace bid I: what! let be your fare;
I am he that him gat, and yond woman him bare.

1st Shepherd. What devil shall he halt? Mac, lo, God makes air.

2nd Shepherd. Let be all that. Now God give him care!
I sagh.

Wife. A pretty child is he,
As sits upon a woman's knee;
A dylly-downe, perdie!
To make a man laugh.

3rd Shepherd. I know him by the ear mark:--that is a good token.

Mac. I tell you, sirs, hark:--his nose was broken.
Since then, told me a clerk,--that he was forespoken.

1st Shepherd. This is a false work.--I would fain be wroken:
Get a weapon!

Wife. He was taken by an elf;
I saw it myself.
When the clock struck twelve,
Was he mis-shapen.

2nd Shepherd. Ye two are right deft,--same in a stead.

3rd Shepherd. Since they maintain their theft,--let's do them to dead.

Mac. If I trespass eft, gird off my head.
With you will I be left.

1st Shepherd. Sirs, do my red
For this trespass,
We will neither ban nor flyte
Fight, nor chyte,
But seize him tight,
And cast him in canvas.

[*They toss Mac for his sins.*]

1st Shepherd (as the three return to the fold). Lord, how I am sore, in point for to tryst:
In faith I may no more, therefore will I rest.

2nd Shepherd. As a sheep of seven score, he weighed in my fist.
For to sleep anywhere, methink that I list.

3rd Shepherd. Now I pray you,
Lie down on this green.

1st Shepherd. On these thefts yet I mean.

3rd Shepherd. Whereto should ye tene?
Do as I say you.

[*Enter an Angel above, who sings "Gloria in Excelsis," then says:*]

Rise, hired-men, heynd, for now is he born
That shall take from the fiend, that Adam had lorn:
That warlock to sheynd, this night is he born.
God is made your friend: now at this morn,
He behests;
To Bedlem go see,
There lies that free

In a crib full poorly,
Betwixt two beasts.

1st Shepherd. This was a quaint stevyn that ever yet I heard.
It is a marvel to nevyn thus to be scared.

2nd Shepherd. Of God's son of heaven, he spoke up word.
All the wood like the levin, methought that he gard
Appear.

3rd Shepherd. He spoke of a bairn
In Bedlem I you warn.

1st Shepherd. That betokens yonder starn
Let us seek him there.

2nd Shepherd. Say, what was his song? Heard ye not how he cracked it?
Three breves to a long.

3rd Shepherd. Yea, marry, he hacked it.
Was no crochet wrong, nor no thing that lacked it.

1st Shepherd. For to sing us among, right as he knacked it,
I can.

2nd Shepherd. Let us see how ye croon
Can ye bark at the moon?

3rd Shepherd. Hold your tongues, have done.

1st Shepherd. Hark after, then.

2nd Shepherd. To Bedlem he bade--that we should gang:
I am full feared--that we tarry too lang.

3rd Shepherd. Be merry and not sad: of mirth is our sang,
Everlasting glad, our road may we fang,
Without noise.

1st Shepherd. Hie we thither quickly;
If we be wet and weary,
To that child and that lady
We have it not to slose.

2nd Shepherd. We find by the prophecy--let be your din--
Of David and Esai, and more than I min;

They prophesied by clergy, that on a virgin
Should he light and ly, to pardon our sin
And slake it,
Our kind from woe;
For Esai said so,
Cite virgo
Concipiet a child that is naked.

3rd Shepherd. Full glad may we be,--and abide that day
That lovely to see,--that all mights may.
Lord, well for me,--for once and for aye,
Might I kneel on my knee--some word for to say
To that child.
But the angel said
In a crib was he laid;
He was poorly arrayed,
Both meaner and mild.

1st Shepherd. Patriarchs that have been,--and prophets beforne,
They desired to have seen--this child that is born.
They are gone full clean,--that have they lorn.
We shall see him, I ween,--e'er it be morn
By token
When I see him and feel,
Then know I full weel
It is true as steel
That prophets have spoken.
To so poor as we are, that he would appear,
First find, and declare by his messenger.

2nd Shepherd. Go we now, let us fare: the place is us near.

3rd Shepherd. I am ready and yare: go we in fear
To that light!
Lord! if thy wills be,
We are lewd all three,
Thou grant us of thy glee,
To comfort thy wight.

[The Shepherds arrive at Bethlehem.]

1st Shepherd. Hail, comely and clean; hail, young child!
Hail, maker, as I mean, of a maiden so mild!
Thou hast wared, I ween, off the warlock so wild,
The false guiler of teen, now goes he beguiled.
Lo, he merry is!

Lo, he laughs, my sweeting,
A welcome meeting!
I have given my greeting
Have a bob of cherries?

2nd Shepherd. Hail, sovereign saviour, for thou hast us sought!
Hail freely, leaf and flow'r, that all thing has wrought!
Hail full of favour, that made all of nought!
Hail! I kneel and I cower. A bird have I brought
To my bairn!
Hail, little tiny mop,
Of our creed thou are crop!
I would drink in thy cup,
Little day-starn.

3rd Shepherd. Hail, darling dear, full of godheed!
I pray thee be near, when that I have need.
Hail! sweet is thy cheer: my heart would bleed
To see thee sit here in so poor weed.
With no pennies.
Hail! put forth thy dall!--
I bring thee but a ball
Have and play thee with all,
And go to the tennis.

Mary. The Father of Heaven, God omnipotent,
That set all on levin, his son has he sent.
My name could he neven, and laught as he went.
I conceived him full even, through might, as God meant;
And new is he born.
He keep you from woe:
I shall pray him so;
Tell forth as ye go,
And mind on this morn.

1st Shepherd. Farewell, lady, so fair to behold,
With thy child on thy knee.

2nd Shepherd. But he lies full cold,
Lord, well is me: now we go forth, behold!

3rd Shepherd. Forsooth, already it seems to be told
Full oft.

1st Shepherd. What grace we have fun.

2nd Shepherd. Come forth, now are we won.

3rd Shepherd. To sing are we bun:
Let take on loft.