

Here begins the pageant of the Shepherds

SHEPHERD I: Lord, but they are blest that hence have passed
They feel no unrest to make them downcast
Here has been great distress for many years past.
Now in cheer of the best; now in wet; now in blast;
Now in care; 5
Now in comfort again;
Now in sun; now in rain;
Now some joy we gain -
And then sadly fare!

Thus this world every day fares on each side, 10
For after our play sorrow comes, deep and wide;
He that holds the most sway when he sits in his pride,
When the test comes, I say, shall be cast aside -
This is seen!
When richest is he, 15
Then comes poverty:
Horseman Jack a'Plenty
Walks then, on the green.

I thank our God - hark ye now, say I -
That for even or odd I have much awry; 20
As heavy as a clod, I weep with mine eye
When I nap or I nod, for cares now gone by,
And sorrow.
All my sheep are gone,
I am not left one; 25
The rot has for them done;
Now beg I, and borrow.

My hands may I wring, and mourning make;
Unless good shall spring, the land I'll forsake,
For the rents are coming, and my purse is weak; 30
I have almost nothing to pay nor to take.

I may sing
 For purse penniless,
 That makes all this heaviness.
 Woe to all my distress 35
 That has no helping!

Thus my mind turn I, the truth for to say,
 By my wits to try to get gold at dice-play.
 My sheep all did die: to the plague they were prey.
 Now great God on high, if fate say not nay, 40
 Send grace!
 To the fair now will I,
 Some sheep to buy,
 And still may I multiply
 For all this hard case! 45

SHEPHERD 2: Bless ye, bless ye – let this be sung –
 And save all that I see here in this throng!
 He save you and me, both abroad and along,
 That hung on a tree – I speak here no wrong.
 Christ save us 50
 For all mischief,
 From the robber and thief,
 From those who bring grief
 And are often against us!
 From boasters and braggers God keep us, too, 55
 That with their long daggers great grievance do;
 Bill-hookers and snaggers with knives sharp and new,
 Such needlers and nagers, much trouble they brew
 And begin.
 He who tries to complain 60
 Had better been slain;
 Both plough and wain
 Will not satisfy him.

He will come in as proud as a lord everywhere;
 With his head in the cloud, in a tangle of hair; 65
 His voice is so loud, with a grim air;
 He should not be allowed such fashions to wear
 As he glides.
 I know not who's better -
 The lad or the master - 70
 Nor who is the greater,
 So stoutly he strides.

If he fancies aught that is mine here today,
 I'll find it dear bought if I say nay!
 But God, that all wrought, help us now I say, 75
 That they may be brought to a better way
 For the soul;
 And let them soon mend
 In all they offend
 That they may ascend 80
 To thee, at thy call.

How, Gib, good morn! Where go ye now?
 Ye go over the corn! Gib, I say, how!
 SHEPHERD 1: Who is that? John Horn, I make God a vow!
 Now, without scoff or scorn, John, how farest thou? 85
 SHEPHERD 2: Ha? Hey!
 Are ye in this town?
 SHEPHERD 1: Yea, by my crown.
 SHEPHERD 2: I thought by your gown
 This was your array! 90

SHEPHERD 1: I never change much, no matter what occurs;
 No shepherd, I'll vouch, could ever do worse.
 SHEPHERD 2: Poor man may well grouch - from the ditch may curse;
 The world is such, and good helpers
 Are none here. 95
 SHEPHERD 1: Well, as I'm alive,
 "A man may not wive

And also thrive,
And all in a year."

SHEPHERD 2: First must we creep, then may we go. 100
 SHEPHERD 1: I go to buy sheep.
 SHEPHERD 2: Nay, not so!
 What? dream ye, or sleep? Where should they go?
 Here shall thou none keep!

SHEPHERD 1: Ah, good sir, ho!
 Who am I?
 They shall pasture freely 105
 Where it seems best to me;
 Here shall thou them see.

SHEPHERD 2: Not so - fie, fie!
 Not one sheep's tail shall thou bring hither.

SHEPHERD 1: I shall bring, without fail, a hundred together. 110
 SHEPHERD 2: Have you been at the aie? Take you now them thither!
 SHEPHERD 1: They shall stay without fail. Go now, bell-wether!
 SHEPHERD 2: I say, hup!
 SHEPHERD 1: I say, hup, now again!
 I say, skip over the plain! 115

SHEPHERD 2: But your wish I disdain:
 Tup, I say, hup!

SHEPHERD 1: What, will thou not yet, I say, let the sheep go?
 Whup!

SHEPHERD 2: Abide yet!

SHEPHERD 1: Will ye do so?
 Knave, hence you get, or you'll fetch a blow 120
 From me, you may bet, on your pate - lo!
 And you'll reel!
 I say, give the sheep space.

SHEPHERD 2: Sir, hold now with good grace:
 Here comes sir Slow-Pace 125
 From the millwheel.

SHEPHERD 3: Now what sort of to-do is this you between?
A good day, you and you!

SHEPHERD 1: Hark what I mean
For to say:
I was off to buy stock; 130
Drove before me my flock;
But he will the path block -
To my sheep give no way!

Though mad he may be, this way shall they go!

SHEPHERD 3: Yea, but tell me truly, where are your sheep, lo? 135

SHEPHERD 2: Sir, none did I see here pass to or fro
Since he spoke to me.

SHEPHERD 3: God give you woe
And sorrow!
Ye fish without a net,
And fume here and fret. 140
Such fools never I met,
Evening or morrow!

There is not here one whit of wit to be found
In these knaves, you'll admit, who stand on this ground.
They would by their wit cause a ship to be drowned! 145
He were well quit who for them with a pound
Were repaid.
They fight with the fist
For what does not exist
An egg, they'd insist, 150
Hatch before it was laid!

May you ever want cheer, abroad and at home!
Like old Moll you appear, out walking alone,
Planning how she would shear all the sheep she would own.
But she fell down, I fear, and her jug by a stone 155
Was broken.
"Oh God!" she did weep;
For, ere she had one sheep
The jug lay in a heap -
The shards were the token. 160

But since quite bare of wisdom ye be,
 Take heed how I fare, and learn here of me:
 Ye need have no care if ye watch carefully.
 Hold ye my mare. This sack throw ye
 On my back, 165
 Whilst I with my hand
 Loosen the band;
 Come now, by me stand,
 Both Gib and Jack.

Is not all shaken out, and no meal is therein? 170
 SHEPHERD 1: Yea, there is no doubt.
 SHEPHERD 3: So are your wits thin.
 If ye look well about, from your toes to your chin.
 So goes your wit out, just as it came in.
 Gather up,
 And seek it again! 175
 SHEPHERD 2: Though we may think it vain,
 He has told us quite plain
 Wisdom to sup.

JACK THE BOY: God send you your due, fools to a man!
 I've seen none such things do but the Fools of Gotham. 180
 Woe to her that bore you! Your sire and your dam,
 Had she brought forth a ewe, a hare or a lamb
 Had done best.
 Of all the fools I can tell,
 From heaven unto hell, 185
 Ye three bear the bell;
 God send you the pest!

SHEPHERD 1: Our sheep, lad, tell me, how are they then?
 BOY: In grass up to the knee.
 SHEPHERD 2: Good luck, lad.
 BOY: Amen!

If ye wish, ye may see: you know your beasts, men. 190
 SHEPHERD 1: Sit we down, all three, and drink shall we then.
 Yea, a turd!
 I had rather eat.
 What is drink without meat?
 Get meat, I repeat, 195
 And set us a board!

 Then may we go dine, our bellies to pack.
 SHEPHERD 2: To wait I incline.
 SHEPHERD 3: By God, take that back!
 I am worthy the wine, I deserve a good snack.
 I waste here my time; I eat hard tack 200
 At your manger!
 SHEPHERD 1: To meat we should go!
 It is best we do so;
 I will not argue - no!-
 To stand in thy danger. 205

 Thou has ever been cursed since we met each other.
 SHEPHERD 3: Now in faith, if I durst, ye are truly my brother.
 SHEPHERD 2: Sirs, let us feast first; these angry words smother,
 For better or worse, with food let us cover
 Our chins! 210
 Lay forth here our store
 Lo; here, brawn of a boar.
 SHEPHERD 1: Set mustard before;
 Our feast now begins.

 Here a foot of a cow, well sauced, it would seem; 215
 The hind leg of a sow, that powdered has been;
 Two blood puddings now, with liver between;
 Be glad, sirs, I vow, my brother, I mean
 Have more!
 Both beef and mutton, 220
 Of a ewe that was rotten -
 Good meat for a glutton! -
 Eat of this store.

SHEPHERD 2: I have here in my hand, boiled and roast,
 An ox-tail so grand – that I like the most – 225
 Spare no cost, I demand. Ha, Ha, let us toast!
 A good pie we can stand – this is good for the frost
 In a morning!
 The snouts of two swine;
 A whole hare but the loin – 230
 No spoons need we to dine
 Here at our feasting.

SHEPHERD 3: Here's another thing – the leg of a goose,
 Egg-covered chicken, pork, partridge, and moose,
 A tart for a king – we'll need no excuse! – 235
 Calf's liver swimming in crab-apple juice:
 Sauce supreme!
 This is a fine sight
 To make a good appetite!

SHEPHERD 1: You're learnèd tonight 240
 From your words it would seem!

If ye could by your grammary reach us a drink,
 I should be more merry; ye know what I think.

SHEPHERD 2: Have good ale of Ely! Ye stand at the brink
 For if thou drink deeply in thy brain it will sink! 245

SHEPHERD 1: Ah, so!
 Our cure without fail:
 Good wholesome ale!

SHEPHERD 3: Too long with the pail –
 Now let me go to! 250

SHEPHERD 2: I curse those lips if you don't leave me part!
 SHEPHERD 1: By God, he but sips; beguiled thou art.
 Behold how he grips!

SHEPHERD 2: Curse you in each part,
 And me, by these hips, if I don't outsmart
 My thirst! 255

Be thou wine, be thou ale,
 Unless my breath fail,
 I shall drink like a whale:
 God clear the way first!

SHEPHERD 3: By my mother Alice, that was deeply drunken! 260
 SHEPHERD 1: Now, as ever have I bliss, to the bottom it is sunken!
 SHEPHERD 2: A bottle yet there is.
 SHEPHERD 3: That is well spoken!
 By my soul, we must kiss.
 SHEPHERD 2: That had I forgotten.
 But hark:
 Whoso can best sing 265
 Shall have the beginning.
 SHEPHERD 1: Now, praise at the parting;
 I shall make you both work!
 We have done our part, and sung here right well;
 I drink, for my part.
 SHEPHERD 2: Pass it round the circle! 270
 SHEPHERD 1: Spare not, by my heart, though thou should drink it all!
 SHEPHERD 3: Thou has drunken a quart – devil take thee to hell!
 SHEPHERD 1: He raves!
 If it were for a sow,
 There's enough drink, I vow. 275
 SHEPHERD 3: Curse you, it's all gone now!
 Ye be both knaves.
 SHEPHERD 1: Nay, we be knaves all – poor men each one.
 So, sir, should ye call.
 SHEPHERD 2: Rest, and be done;
 We will not brawl.
 SHEPHERD 1: Then decide now, come,
 Who this meat shall gather up and take home.
 SHEPHERD 3: Now then, sires,
 For our soul's good, listen:
 Give it to poor men.

SHEPHERD 1:	Gather up here, then, Ye hungry begging friars!	285
SHEPHERD 2:	It draws near night. Come, go we to rest. I am ready alright; I think it the best.	
SHEPHERD 3:	For fear of a fright, a cross let us cast - Christ's cross - for our plight, east and west, In our need: Iesus onazorus Cruciefixus Morcus, Andreus, God be our speed!	290 295
ANGEL:	Hearken, shepherds, awake! Find love now you shall: He is born for your sake, Lord perpetual. He is come here to take and ransom you all, Your sorrow to slake, king imperial, He speaks true. That child is born At Bethlehem this morn; Ye shall find him laid warm Between beasts two.	 300
SHEPHERD 1:	Ah, God's own dear Dominus! What was that song? It was very curious, short notes with the long; I pray to God, save us, now in this throng I fear me, by Jesus, something is wrong; I thought One screamed out aloud; I suppose it was a cloud; In my ears here it soughed By him that me bought!	305 310

SHEPHERD 2: Nay, that may not be, as I shall explain,
 For he spoke to us three like a man, quite plain; 315
 Whe he gleamed on this lea, he shook my brain!
 An angel was he, this is certain -
 No doubt.
 Of a babe he did speak;
 For him now we must seek; 320
 And that bright star unique
 Bears this tokening out.

SHEPHERD 3: It was wondrous to see, so bright as it shone.
 I would have thought, truly, it had been the sun,
 But with mine eye, trust me, I saw from this stone 325
 A good song, and merry, such as I have heard none,
 I'll record.
 As he said in a scream,
 Or I heard in my dream,
 We should go to Bethle'em 330
 To worship that lord.

SHEPHERD 1: That same child is he that prophets foretold
 Should make them free, whom Adam had sold.

SHEPHERD 2: Attend now to me! These words unfold
 In the book of Isaiah: a prince most bold 335
 Shall he be;
 And king with crown,
 Set on David's throne;
 Never such a one
 Here did we see. 340

SHEPHERD 3: This also says he - our fathers us told:
 A virgin should be come from Jesse of old
 By grace forth should she bring a flower so bold
 Now a virgin, trust me, these words does uphold
 As ye see; 345
 Trust it now we may,
 He is born this day,

Exiēt virga
De radice lesse.

- SHEPHERD 1: Of him spoke more: the Sibyl, I mean; 350
And Nebuchadnezzar, from our faith alien;
In the furnace where were three children seen,
A fourth, too, stood there, who like God's son did seem.
- SHEPHERD 2: That figure 355
Was given as revelation
That God would have a son;
This is a good lesson
We should consider.
- SHEPHERD 3: Of him spoke Jeremi, and Moses also, 360
Where he saw close by a bush burning, lo!
When he came to espy if it were so
At his coming nigh, unburned it was, we know -
A wonder!
- SHEPHERD 1: That was to show, truly, 365
Her holy virginity,
That she undefiled should be -
This do I ponder -
- Yet should have a child. Such was never seen!
- SHEPHERD 2: Peace, man, thou art beguiled! Thou'lt see him clear and clean, 370
Come of a maid so mild - a great marvel I mean!
Yea, and she undefiled, a virgin clean -
And soon!
- SHEPHERD 1: No impossibility 375
Exists for God, truly;
Secure it shall be
If God wills it done!
- SHEPHERD 2: Habbakkuk, and Elijah truly prophesied so, 380
Elizabeth and Zachary, and many more also;
And David, truly, he to this is witness, lo;
John Baptist, certainly, and Daniel, as ye know.

SHEPHERD 2: Now, by God that me bought, it was a merry song! 415
I dare say that he brought four and twenty to a long.
I would that we sought to sing this along.

SHEPHERD 1: In faith, I think not, so many notes throng
In a heap!
They were gentle and small, 420
Very well-toned withal.

SHEPHERD 3: Yea, but I know them all -
They long forth to leap!

SHEPHERD 1: Break out your voice! Let's see how ye yelp.
SHEPHERD 3: I've a cold in my nose - I'll need some help. 425
SHEPHERD 2: Ah, thy heart is in thy hose!

SHEPHERD 1: I shall give thee a skelp
If this song thou lose!

SHEPHERD 3: Thou are a cruel whelp
For angering!

SHEPHERD 2: Go to - begin now!
SHEPHERD 1: He doesn't know how. 430
SHEPHERD 3: Sing forever, I vow;
Follow as I sing.

SHEPHERD 1: Now we have sung all out, in our song today.
SHEPHERD 2: Joy to your snout! It's as well away.
SHEPHERD 3: Then let us set out, for I will not stay. 435
SHEPHERD 1: No moon I see about, that may light our way.
Nevertheless,
Let us keep our promise.

SHEPHERD 2: I hold that the best.
SHEPHERD 3: Then must we go east - 440
That is my guess.

SHEPHERD 1: Would God that we might this young babe see!
SHEPHERD 2: Many prophets that sight have desired, truly:
That babe so bright.

SHEPHERD 3: Ah, God! - if he
Would show us that light, then truly might we 445

Say we had seen
 That which many saints desired,
 And which prophets inspired;
 Yet, for all they inquired,
 Their eyes long closed have been. 450

SHEPHERD 2: God grant us that grace.

SHEPHERD 3: God do so.

SHEPHERD 1: Yet wait, sirs, a space: lo, yonder - lo!
 It comes to us apace, yon star aglow.

SHEPHERD 2: It is all ablaze! Our way let us go.
 Here he is! 455

SHEPHERD 3: Who shall first enter there?

SHEPHERD 1: I know not, by my hair!

SHEPHERD 2: Ye are eldest, I swear;
 Ye should do this.

SHEPHERD 1: Hail! "King" I thee call! Hail, most of might! 460
 Hail, worthiest of all! Hail, duke! Hail, knight!
 Of great and small thou art lord by right;
 Hail perpetual! Hail, fairest of sight!
 Here I offer:
 I pray thee to take, 465
 If thou would, for my sake -
 And with this a game make -
 This little spruce coffer.

SHEPHERD 2: Hail, little tiny mop, rewarder indeed!
 Hail, but one drop of grace at my need! 470
 Hail, little milksop! Hail, David's seed!
 Of our creed, thou art top: hail, the Godhead!
 This ball
 Take thou, I crave!
 Little it is I have; 475
 This will I vouchsave,
 To play thee withal.

SHEPHERD 3: Hail, maker of man! Hail, sweeting!
 Hail, all that I can! Hail, little wee thing!
 I kneel to thee, then, for joy almost weeping. 480
 Hail, that all began! This bottle as greeting
 Now treasure.
 It is an old proverb:
 "A game and a good word
 To drink of a gourd" - 485
 It holds a good measure.

MARY: He that all things do may, maker of heaven's hall,
 That is to say, he that I my son call,
 Reward you this day as in seven he made all;
 He grant you for ay his bliss eternal 490
 Continuing;
 He give you good grace!
 Tell what passed in this place;
 He speed your pace,
 And grant you good ending! 495

SHEPHERD 1: Farewell, fair Lord, with thy mother also.
 SHEPHERD 2: This shall we record wherever we go.
 SHEPHERD 3: We shall be restored - God grant it be so!
 SHEPHERD 1: Amen to that word! Sing we this now
 On high: 500
 Gladden all, far and near,
 With great good cheer!
 To praise this lamb here,
 Sing now, say I! 504

Here ends the first pageant of the shepherds.