

by the ultimate test of counting on the fingers. This may seem to be going somewhat far afield from our immediate subject, but not really so. Much of fifteenth-century popular verse is rough, indeed often defective, though not nearly as often so as verse written in fumbling or decadent imitation of foreign modes. But only one blind to the historic facts of English prosody, deaf to what it means of magic in modern verse, will deny that the popular verse of this period, despite foreign influence, is idiomatically English, and that it preserved an English tradition which to-day gives our verse a flexibility and variety infinitely superior to the regularity and monotony of the exotic rhythm over which, while assimilating its best qualities, it triumphed.

1. Lc
2. Lc
3. D
4. W
5. W
6. H
7-9.
10. H
11. L
12. L
13, 14
15. B
16. B
17, 18
19, 20
21. F
22, 23
24. W
25, 26
27. T
28. B
29. H
30. L
31. H
32. L
33-35
36. B
37. W
38. L
39. L
40. H
41. W
42. E
43. B
44. E
45. M
46. O
47, 48
49, 50
51. I
52. I
53. S
54. E
55. S
56. V
57. I
58. I
59. V
60, G
62. E
63. L
64-66
67. S
68. G
69. F
70. T
72. M
73. T
74. G
75. S
76. V
77. I

Months & years taken up
Construction of early Eng.
text.

THE ENGLISH QUEM QUÆRITIS

FROM THE REGULARIS CONCORDIA MONACHORUM

[WITH regard to the trope in general, see the *Introduction*. The *Regularis Concordia Anglicæ Nationis Monachorum*, from which this version of the *Quem Quæritis* is taken, may be best consulted in the edition of W. S. Logeman, *De Consuetudine Monachorum*, in *Anglia*, vol. xiii, 365. For critical comment and discussion of authorship and date, see in particular Logeman, *Anglia*, vol. xv, 20, F. Tupper, *Modern Language Notes*, vol. viii, 344, Chambers, *Mediæval Stage*, vol. ii, 306. The work has been accredited to Dunstan and Ælfric. The better view seems to be that of Chambers, that it was written by, or compiled under the oversight of, Ethelwold, who became Bishop of Winchester in 963. Its date falls between 965, when Elfrida, who is mentioned in the *Proœmium*, became queen, and the death of Edgar in 975, in whose reign it was compiled.

This version of the *Quem Quæritis* is of special interest because it was in use in England, because of its early date, and because of the fullness with which the ritual is given. Only the leading words of the dialogue are given, but the missing words are here supplied in brackets. The original Latin of the dialogue is retained in the translation, as elsewhere in the citations where parts of the service are quoted, but a translation is provided in the notes. It seemed desirable to give with the *Quem Quæritis* also the cere-

monial of the Adoration and Deposition of the Cross, which precede it and with which it is connected. The more important parts of the original in this connection are printed by Chambers in abbreviated form in his *Appendix O*; he gives a translation of the parts concerning the *Quem Queritis*, vol. ii, 14-16. Manly prints both this *Quem Queritis*, vol. i, xix, and one from two tropers originally belonging to Winchester Cathedral. The passages below will be found at pp. 416-419, 421-423, 426-428 of Logeman's edition.]

On the Parasceve¹ day [Good Friday] let Tenebræ² [*nocturna laus*] be performed as before described. Thereafter let all those coming to Prime³ approach unshod until that the cross is adored. For, on that same day, at the time of Nones,⁴ let the abbot go with the brethren to the church. The prayer being finished, when he shall have been vested in the usual manner, coming with the servers of the altar from the sacristy before the altar to offer prayer, let him go thence to his own seat in silence. Then let the sub-deacon go up to read the lesson from the prophet Hosea, *In tribulatione sua*. Then follows the respond *Domine audivi* with four verses. Thereafter the prayer *Deus a quo et Judas* is offered by the abbot with a genuflection. Thereafter is read another lesson *Dixit Dominus ad Moysen*. The *tractus*, *Eripe me, Domine*, follows. Thereafter the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John is read. For this Passion let the deacon not say *Dominus vobiscum*, but *Passio Domini*, &c., no one replying *Gloria tibi, Domine*. And when there is read in the gospel *Partiti sunt vestimenta mea*, &c., forthwith let two deacons strip

the altar of its covering, previously placed beneath the Gospel, doing this in the manner of one who steals.⁵ Thereafter let the prayers be celebrated, and let the abbot, coming before the altar, begin the special prayers of the day which follow, and say the first without genuflection as if reading, *Oremus dilectissimi nobis*, &c. These things fulfilled in due order, let the cross forthwith be prepared before the altar, supported on either side by two deacons within the space left between it and the altar. Then let them sing *Popule meus*, but let two sub-deacons, standing before the cross, sing in response in Greek, *Agios O Theos, agios y[s]chiros, agios athanatos, eleison ymas*. And the choir likewise that very same in Latin, *Sanctus Deus*. Let the cross then be borne by the deacons themselves before the altar, and let an acolyte follow with a cushion, upon which the holy cross may be placed. And, the antiphon finished to which the choir responds in Latin, let them sing the same as before, *Qu[i]a edux[i] vos per desertum*.^{*} Let the sub-deacons again respond in Greek as before, *Agios*, as above. And again the choir in Latin as before, *Sanctus Deus*. And let the deacons likewise, elevating the cross, sing as before, *Quid ultra*. Again the sub-deacons as before, *Agios, ut supra*. And again the choir in Latin, *Sanctus Deus*, as above. After this, turning to the priest with the cross bared, let them sing the antiphon *Ecce lignum crucis*; and again, *Crucem tuam adoramus*; and again, *Dum fabricator mundi*; [and again (?)] [*P*]ange lingua. So soon as it is bared, let the abbot come before the holy cross, and prostrate himself thrice successively with all the breth-

* MS. (Logeman) *perde sertum*.

ren at the right side of the choir, namely the seniors and juniors, and with great sighing of the heart let him pray by intoning the seven penitential psalms with the appropriate prayers of the holy cross. [Directions for the psalms and accompanying prayers follow.] . . . And, kissing the cross with humility, let him rise. Then let all the brethren at the left side of the choir do the same with devout minds. When, indeed, the cross has been saluted by the abbot or by all, let the abbot himself return to his seat, the while every cleric and the people do the same thing.

For, since on this day we celebrate the deposition of the body of our Saviour, we have decided to follow, with close similarity, the usage of certain religious, worthy of imitation for confirming the faith of the ignorant vulgar and of neophytes — if so it should have seemed good to any one, or in such wise have pleased him — in the manner following.⁶ Let there be, indeed, in a part of the altar which is bare, some sort of a representation of the sepulchre and a veil of some kind drawn about it, in which let the holy cross, when it has been adored, be deposited with the following ceremonial. Let the deacons who before bore it come and wind it in linen in the place where it was adored. Then let them carry it back, singing the antiphon *In pace in id ipsum habitabit*, also *Caro mea requiescet in spe*, until they come to the place of the tomb [*monumento*, read *monumenti*], and the cross being deposited as if it were the buried body of our Lord Jesus Christ, let them say the antiphon *Sepulto domino, signatum est monumentum, ponentes milites qui custodirent eum*. Let the holy cross be guarded with all reverence in this same place until the Sunday night

of his resurrection. At night, indeed, let two brothers, or three, or more if there shall be so large a gathering, be appointed, to observe faithful vigils there by singing psalms. These things done, let the deacon and sub-deacon enter from the sacristy with the body of the Lord which remained from the day before and with a chalice with unconsecrated wine, and let them place it upon the altar, &c. [The Mass of the Pre-sanctified⁷ follows, followed by the services of Easter Eve.] . . . During the same night [of Easter Eve], before the bells of Matins are rung, let the sacristans take up the cross and set it in some suitable place. First in the Nocturnes, when the praise of God is begun in the church by the abbot or some priest, let him say *Labia mea aperies* once only, and the *Deus in adiutorium meum intende* with the *Gloria*. Then, the psalm *Domine, quid multiplicati sunt*, being omitted, let the cantor begin the Invitatory. Then the three antiphons with the three psalms. These finished, let a fitting verse be said, then as many lessons with the responds pertaining rightly thereunto.

While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brothers vest themselves, one of whom, vested in an alb, enters as if to do something, and, in an inconspicuous way, approaches the place where the sepulchre is, and there, holding a palm in his hands, sits quiet. While the third respond is chanted, let the three others approach, all alike vested in copes, bearing thuribles⁸ with incense in their hands, and, with hesitating steps, in the semblance of persons seeking something, let them come before the place of the sepulchre. These things are done, indeed, in representation of the angel sitting within the tomb and of the

1. L.
2. L.
3. D.
4. W.
5. W.
6. H.
7-9.
10. H.
11. L.
12. L.
13, 14.
15. B.
16. B.
17, 18.
19, 20.
21. F.
22, 23.
24. W.
25, 26.
27. T.
28. B.
29. H.
30. L.
31. H.
32. L.
33-35.
36. H.
37. V.
38. L.
39. L.
40. E.
41. V.
42. E.
43. B.
44. E.
45. M.
46. C.
47, 48.
49, 50.
51. I.
52. I.
53. S.
54. F.
55. S.
56. V.
57. I.
58. I.
59. V.
60, 61.
62. F.
63. I.
64-66.
67. S.
68. C.
69. F.
70, 71.
72. I.
73. T.
74. C.
75. E.
76. V.
77. I.

women who came with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When, therefore, he who is seated sees the three approaching as if wandering about and seeking something, let him begin to sing melodiously and in a voice moderately loud, *Quem queritis [in sepulchro, O Christicolæ?]*.⁹ When this has been sung to the end, let the three respond in unison, *Iesum Nazarenum [crucifixum, O calicola]*. Then he, *Non est hic. Surrexit, sicut prædixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis*. Upon the utterance of this command, let the three turn to the choir and say, *Alleluia, resurrexit Dominus!* This said, let him, still remaining seated, say as if calling them back, the antiphon *Venite, et videte locum [ubi positus erat Dominus. Alleluia, Alleluia!]*. Having said this, however, let him rise and lift the veil, and show them the place empty of the cross, but the cloths, only, laid there with which the cross was wrapped. When they see this, let them set down the thuribles that they have carried within that same sepulchre, and take up the cloth and hold it up before the clergy, and, as if in testimony that the Lord has risen and is not now wrapped therein, let them sing this antiphon: *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro [qui pro nobis pependit in ligno]*, and let them lay the cloth upon the altar. The antiphon finished, let the prior, rejoicing with them in the triumph of our King, in that, death vanquished, he has risen, begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*. This begun, all the bells are rung together, at the end of which let the priest say the verse, *In resurrectione tua, Christe*, as far as this word, and let him begin Matins [read *Lauds*], saying, *Deus, in adiutorium meum intende, &c.*

THE BROME ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

[THE translation is based upon Manly's edition in his *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama*, and the editions of Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, upon which his edition was based, in *Anglia*, vol. vii, 316-337, and *A Commonplace Book of the Fifteenth Century*. . . . Printed from the Original MS. at Brome Hall, Suffolk, by Lady Caroline Kerrison. Edited with Notes by Lucy Toulmin Smith. London and Norwich, 1886. Local entries in the commonplace book, in which the play was found, date from 1499. The play probably dates from about 1470 or 1480. Of the five extant plays on its theme, no one approaches it in the natural dramatic feeling with which the pathos of the situation is brought out; the change of Isaac's mood, most charming and touching, to childish gayety and sportiveness when his death is averted is particularly striking. The play which most nearly equals it in quality is the Dublin version, published by J. P. Collier, *Five Miracle Plays*, 1836. For a description of the MS., see the article in *Anglia, ut supra*. Emendations are suggested by Holthausen, *Anglia*, vol. xiii, 361.]

[*Abraham and Isaac enter.*]

Abraham.

Father of Heaven, omnipotent, *a b*
 With all my heart to thee I call,
 Thou hast given me both land and rent, *a*
 And my livelihood thou hast to me sent, *a*
 I thank thee greatly evermore for all. *L*

First of the earth thou madest Adam,
 And Eve also to be his wife;
 All other creatures from these two came:
 And now thou has granted me, Abraham,
 Here in this land to lead my life. 10

In mine age thou hast granted me this
 That with me should dwell this young child dear.
 I love nothing so much, ywis,
 Except thine own self, dear Father of Bliss,
 As my own sweet son, my Isaac here. 15

I have divers children more, I know,
 But I love them not half so well as he.
 This fair sweet child he doth cherish me so,
 In every place wherever I go,
 That no affliction may trouble me. 20

And therefore, Fátter of Heaven, I thee pray
 For his health and also for his grace.
 Nów, Lord, keep him both night and day
 That never affliction nor terror may
 Come to my child in any place. 25

Now come on, Isaac, my own sweet child,
 Go we home and take our rest.

Isaac.

Abraham, mine own father so mild,
 To follow you I am readiest
 Late and early, God wot! 30

Abraham.

Come on, sweet child, I love thee best
 Of all the children that ever I begot.

[*Abraham and Isaac go. God speaks:*]

Deus.

Mine angel, fast hie thee on thy way,
 And unto mid-earth anon do thou go—
 Abraham's heart now will I essay,
 Whether he be stedfast or no. 35

Say I commanded him for to take
 His young son Isaac, he loveth so,
 And with his blood that he sacrifice make
 If my friendship he would have and know. 40

Show him the way unto the hill
 Where that his sacrifice shall be.
 I shall essay now his good will,
 Whether he loveth better his child or me.
 All men shall take example by him
 My commandments how they shall keep. 45

[*The Angel goes to find Abraham. Abraham speaks:*]

Abraham.

Now, Father of Heaven, that didst form everything,
 My prayers I make to thee again,
 For this day my tender offering
 Here must I give to thee amain. 50

Ah, Lord God, Almighty King,
 What kind will be to thee most fain?
 If I had thereof true knowing,
 It should be done with might and main
 Full soon by me! 55

To do thy pleasure on a hill,
 Verily, it is my will,
 Dear Father, God in Trinity!

[*The Angel appears to Abraham.*]

The Angel.

Abraham, Abraham, be at rest!

Our Lord commandeth thee to take 60

Isaac, thy young son, that thou lovest best

And with his blood that thou sacrifice make.

Into the Land of Vision do thou go,

And offer thy child unto thy Lord;

I shall thee lead and show also. 65

To God's bidding, Abraham, give accord,

And follow me upon this green!

Abraham.

Welcome to me be my Lord's command!

And his behest I will not withstand —

Yet Isaac, my young son in land, 70

A full dear child to me hath been!

Were God so pleased, I were liefer rid

Of all the good that I have, he gave,

Than that Isaac, my son, were discomfited, 75

So God in heaven my soul may save!

No thing on earth so much love I bore,

And now I must the child go kill!

Ah, Lord God, my conscience is troubled sore,

And yet, my dear Lord, I dread me the more 80

To begrudge anything against thy will.

I love my child as my life,

But yet I love my God much more thereto,

For though my heart should make any strife,

Yet will I not spare for child or wife, 85

But do as my Lord hath bid me do!

Though I love my son never so great a deal,

Yet smite off his head soon I shall.

Ah, Father of Heaven, to thee I kneel,

A hard death my son shall feel,

For to honor thee, Lord, withal! 90

The Angel.

Abraham, Abraham, this is well said,

And all these decrees look thou obey!

But in thy heart be nothing dismayed.

Abraham.

Nay, nay, forsooth! I hold me well paid

To please my God the best I may. 95

For though my heart be in heaviness set

The blood of my own dear son to see,

Yet will I not withhold my debt,

But Isaac, my son, I will go get,

And come as fast as ever may be. 100

[*The Angel departs. Abraham goes to fetch Isaac.*]

Abraham.

Now, Isaac, my own son dear,

Where art thou, child! Speak to me.

Isaac.

My fair sweet father, I am here,

And make my prayers to the Trinity.

Abraham.

Rise up, my child, and fast come hither, 105

My gentle bairn that art so wise,

For we too, child, must go together,

And unto my Lord make sacrifice.

Isaac.

I am full ready, my father. Lo!
 Given to your hands, I stand right here, 110
 And whatsoever ye bid me do, even so
 It shall be done with glad cheer,
 Full well and fine.

Abraham.

Ah, Isaac, mine own son so dear,
 God's blessing I give thee, and mine. 115

Hold this fagot upon thy back,
 And I myself here fire shall bring.

Isaac.

Father, all this here will I pack,
 I am full fain to do your bidding.

Abraham.

Ah, Lord of Heaven, my hands I wring, 120
 This child's words wound like death my heart!

Now, Isaac, son, go we on our way
 Unto yon mount with might and main.

Isaac.

Let us go, my dear father, as fast as I may —
 To follow you I am full fain, 125
 Although I be slender.

Abraham.

Ah, Lord, my heart breaketh in twain,
 This child's words, they be so tender!

Ah, Isaac son, anon lay it there,
 No longer upon thy back it hold, 130
 For I must make ready prayer
 To honor my Lord God as I was told.

Isaac.

Lo, my dear father, where it is.
 To cheer you, always I draw me near,
 But, father, I marvel sore at this, 135
 Why it is that ye make this heavy cheer,

And also, father, ever more fear I —
 Where is your quick beast that ye should kill?
 Both fire and wood we have ready by,
 But quick beast have we none on this hill. 140

A quick beast, I wot well, slain must be,
 Your sacrifice to make.

Abraham.

Dread thee not, my child, I counsel thee
 Our Lord will unto this place send me
 Some manner of beast to take 145
 By his sweet command.

Isaac.

Yea, father, but my heart beginneth to quake
 To see that sharp sword in your hand.

Whý bear ye your sword drawn so?
 Of your countenance I have much wonder! 150

Abraham.

Ah, Father of Heaven, so great is my woe,
 This child here breaks my heart in sunder.

Isaac.

Tell me, my dear father, ere that ye cease —
 Bear ye your sword thus drawn for me?

Abraham.

Ah, Isaac, sweet son, peace, peace! 155
 For in sooth thou breakest my heart in three!

Isaac.

Now truly, father, on somewhat ye think,
That ye mourn thus more and more.

Abraham.

Ah, Lord of Heaven, let thy grace down sink,
For my heart was never half so sore! 160

Isaac.

I pray you, father, let me know the truth,
Whether I shall have any harm or no.

Abraham.

Not yet may I tell thee, sweet son, in sooth,
My heart is now so full of woe.

Isaac.

Dear father, I pray you, hide it not from me, 165
But some of your thought, tell ye me, your son.

Abraham.

Ah, Isaac, Isaac, I must kill thee!

Isaac.

Kill me, father? Alas, what have I done!

If in aught I have trespassed against you, God wot,
With a rod ye may make me full mild — 170
And with your sharp sword kill me not,
For in truth, father, I am but a child.

Abraham.

I am full sorry, son, thy blood to spill,
But truly, my child, it is not as I please.

Isaac.

Now I would to God my mother were here on this hill!
She would kneel for me on both her knees 176
To save my life.

And since that my mother is not here,
Change your look, I pray you, father dear,
And kill me not with your knife. 180

Abraham.

Forsooth, my son, save I thee kill,
I should grieve God right sore, I fear,
It is his commandment and also his will
That I should do this same deed here.

He commanded me, son, for certain 185
To make my sacrifice with thy blood.

Isaac.

And is it God's will that I should be slain?

Abraham.

Yea, truly, Isaac, my son so good,
And therefore my hands I wring!

Isaac.

Now, father, against my Lord's decree, 190
I will never murmur, loud or still.
He might have sent me a better destiny,
If it had been his will.

Abraham.

Forsooth, son, save this deed I did,
In grievous displeasure our Lord would be. 195

Isaac.

Nay, nay, father, God forbid
That ever ye should grieve him for me!

Ye have other children, one or two,
Which ye should love well in natural kind.
I pray you, father, no more your grief renew, 200
For, if I am once dead and gone from you,
I shall soon be out of your mind.

1. L
2. L
3. D
4. W
5. V
6. H
7-9.
10. H
11. L
12. L
13, 14
15. B
16. B
17, 18
19, 20
21. F
22, 23
24. V
25, 26
27. T
28. B
29. F
30. L
31. F

32. I
33-35
36. F
37. V
38. I
39. F
40. I
41. V
42. I
43. F
44. I
45. M
46. C
47, 48
49, 50
51. I
52. I
53. S
54. I
55. S
56. V
57. I
58. I
59. V
60. C
62. I
63. I
64-66
67. S
68. C
69. I
70, 71
72. I
73. V
74. C
75. S
76. V
77. I

Therefore do our Lord's bidding,

And when I am dead, then pray for me.

But, good father, tell ye my mother nothing,
Say that I am in another country dwelling.

20c

Abraham.

Ah, Isaac, Isaac, blessed mayest thou be!

My heart in anguish beginneth to rise
To see the blood of thy blessed body!

Isaac.

Father, since it may be no other wise,
Let it pass over, as well as I.

21c

But, father, ere I go unto my death,
I pray you bless me with your hand.

Abraham.

Now, Isaac, with all my breath,
My blessing I give thee upon this land,
And, verily, God's thereto with this.
Isaac, Isaac, son, rise up and stand,
Thy fair sweet mouth that I may kiss.

21f

Isaac.

Now farewell, my own father so fine,
And greet well my mother as may accord,
But I pray you, father, to hide mine eyne
That I see not the stroke of your sharp sword
That my flesh shall defile.

22c

Abraham.

Son, thy words make me to weep full sore —
Now, my dear son Isaac, speak no more.

22b

Isaac.

Ah, my own dear father, wherefore?
We shall speak here together so little while.

And since that I must needs be dead,
Yet, my dear father, to you I pray,
Smite but few strokes at my head
And make an end as soon as ye may,
And tarry not too long.

23c

Abraham.

Child, thy meek words do me dismay,
So welaway must be my song!

Except alone that I do God's will.
Ah, Isaac, my own sweet child,
Kiss me yet again upon this hill —
In all the world is none so mild!

23b

Isaac.

Now, truly, father, all this tarrying,
It doeth my heart but harm;
I pray you, father, make an ending.

24c

Abraham.

Come up, sweet child, into my arm.

I must bind thy hands two,
Although thou be never so mild.

Isaac.

Ah, mercy, father! Why should ye so do?

24b

Abraham.

That thou should'st not resist, my child.

Isaac.

Nay, indeed, father, I'll not try to let¹ you.
 Do on, for all me, your will,
 And the purpose to which ye have set you,
 For God's love, hold it steadfast still. 250

I am full sorry this day to die,
 But yet I wish not my God to grieve.
 Do your pleasure for all me full boldly,
 My fair sweet father, I give you leave.

But, father, I pray you evermore, 255
 Nothing unto my mother tell,

If she knew it, she would weep full sore,
 For she loveth me, father, in truth, full well —
 May God's blessing with her be!

Now farewell, my mother so sweet, 260
 We two are like no more to meet,

Abraham.

Ah, Isaac, Isaac, son, thou dost make me greet,
 And with thy words thou doth anguish me!

Isaac.

I am sorry, sweet father, to grieve you truly;
 I cry you mercy for what I have done; 265
 And for all trespass I did you unduly,
 Forgive me, dear father, all I have done.
 God of Heaven be with me!

Abraham.

Ah, dear child, forbear to moan!
 In all thy life, thou didst grieve me none. 270
 Now blessed be thou, body and bone,

¹ Prevent.

That ever thou wert bred and born.
 Thou hast been to me a child full good.
 But in truth, child, though I mourn,
 Never so fast,¹

Yet must I needs here at the last 275
 In this place shed all thy blood.

Therefore, my dear son, here shalt thou lie.
 Unto my work I must proceed.
 In truth, I as lief were myself should die —
 If God would be pleased with my deed — 280
 And mine own body for to offer!

Isaac.

Ah, mercy, father! mourn ye no more.
 Your weeping maketh mine heart as sore
 As mine own death I am to suffer.

Your kerchief, father, about mine eyes wind. 285

Abraham.

So I shall, sweetest child on earth so broad.

Isaac.

Now still, good father, have this in mind,
 And smite me not often with your sharp sword,
 But hastily that it be sped.

Here Abraham laid a cloth on Isaac's face, thus saying:

Abraham.

Now farewell, my child so full of grace! 290

Isaac.

Ah, father, father, turn downward my face!
 For of your sharp sword I am ever adread.

Abraham.

To do this deed I am full sorry,
 But, Lord, thy behest I will not withstand.

¹ See note with regard to the numbering of the lines.

Isaac.

Ah, Father of Heaven, to thee I cry. 295
 Lord, receive me into thy hand!

Abraham.

Lo, now is the time come for sure
 That my sword into his neck shall bite.
 Ah, Lord, my heart may not this endure,
 I may not find it in my heart to smite! 300
 My heart is not equal thereunto!
 Yet fain would I work my Lord's will,
 But this young innocent lieth so still,
 I may not find it in my heart him to kill —
 O Father of Heaven, what shall I do! 305

Isaac.

Ah, mercy, father, why tarry ye so,
 And let me so long on this heath thus lie?
 Now I would God the stroke were no more to know.
 Father, heartily I pray you, shorten my woe,
 And let me not wait thus, looking to die. 310

Abraham.

Now, heart, why would'st thou not break in thee?
 Yet shalt thou not make me to my God unmild.
 I will no longer hold back for thee,
 Because that my God would offended be.
 Now receive the stroke, my own dear child. 315

*Here Abraham drew his stroke, and the Angel took the
 sword in his hand suddenly.*

The Angel.

I am an angel, thou mayest quickly soon see,
 That from heaven to thee is sent.

Our Lord a hundred times thanketh thee
 For the keeping of his commandment.
 He knoweth thy will and also thine heart, 320
 That thou fearest him above everything,
 And to ease of thy heaviness a part,
 A fair ram yonder I did bring.

Lo, among the briars he standeth tied.
 Now, Abraham, amend thy mood, 325
 For Isaac, thy young son, here by thy side,
 This day shall not shed his blood.
 Go, make thy sacrifice with yon ram.
 Now farewell, blessed Abraham,
 For unto heaven I go now home: 330
 The way is full straight.
 Take up thy son so free!

*[The Angel goes.]**Abraham.*

Ah, Lord, I thank thee for thy great grace,
 Now am I eased in divers wise.
 Arise up, Isaac, my dear son, arise, 335
 Arise up, sweet child, and come to me!

Isaac.

Ah, mercy, father, why do ye not smite?
 Ah, smite on, father, once with your knife!

Abraham.

Peace, my sweet son, let your heart be light,
 For our Lord of Heaven hath granted thy life 340
 By his angel now,

That thou shalt not die this day, son, truly.

Isaac.

Ah, father, full glad then were I,

Iwis,¹ father, I say, iwis,

If this tale were true!

345

Abraham.

A hundred times, my son fair of hue,

For joy thy mouth now will I kiss.

Isaac.

Ah, my dear father Abraham,

Will not God be wroth that we do thus?

Abraham.

No, no, surely, my sweet son! for yon same ram² 350

He hath sent hither down to us.

Yon beast shall die here in thy stead,

In honor of our Lord, alone!

Go fetch him hither, my child, indeed.

355

Isaac.

Father, I will go catch him by the head,

And bring yon beast with me anon.

Ah, sheep, sheep, blessed may thou be!

That ever thou wert sent down hither!

Thou shalt this day die for me,

360

In worship of the Holy Trinity.

Now come fast and go we together,

To my father quick hie!

Though thou be never so gentle and good,

Yet I had liefer thou should'st shed thy blood,

365

In sooth, sheep, than I!

¹ For certain, truly.

² See note as regards the numbering of the lines.

Lo, father, I have brought here, full smart,

This gentle sheep, and him to you I give,

But, Lord God, I thank thee with all my heart,

For I am glad that I shall live,

370

And kiss again once my dear mother!

Abraham.

Now be right merry, my sweet child,

For this quick beast that is so mild,

Here I shall offer before all other.

Isaac.

And I will fast begin to blow,

375

This fire shall burn a full good speed,

But, father, if I stoop down low,

Ye will not kill me with your sword, I trow?

Abraham.

No, to fear, sweet son, thou hast surely no need.

My mourning is past!

380

Isaac.

Yea, but I would that sword were in a fire, indeed,

For, father, it maketh me full sore aghast!

Here Abraham made his offering, kneeling and saying thus:

Abraham.

Now, Lord God of Heaven in Trinity,

Almighty God omnipotent,

My offering I make in worship of thee,

385

And with this quick beast I thee present.

Lord, receive thou my intent,

As thou art God and ground of our grace.

Deus.

Abraham, Abraham, well mayest thou speed,

And Isaac, thy young son, thee by!

390

Truly, Abraham, for this deed,
 I shall multiply of you both the seed,
 As thick as stars be in the sky,
 Both of greater and less,
 And as thick as the sand is in the sea,
 So thick multiplied your seed shall be,
 This grant I you for your goodness.

Of you shall come increase great enow,
 And ever be in bliss without end,
 For me, as God alone, ye avow
 In fear, and to my commandments bow,
 My blessing I give wheresoever ye wend!

Abraham.

Lo, of this work that we have wrought,
 Isaac, my son, how think ye still?
 Full glad and blithe may we be in thought
 That we murmured not against God's will
 On this fair heath here!

Isaac.

Ah, father, I thank our Lord heartily,
 That so well my wit hath served me,
 The Lord God more than my death to fear.

Abraham.

Why, dearworthy son, wert thou frightened so?
 Full boldly, child, tell me thy lore.

Isaac.

By my faith, yea, father, — if aught I know,
 I was never so afraid before,
 As I have been on yon hill!

But, by my faith, father, I swear
 I will nevermore come there,
 Except it be against my will!

Abraham.

Yea, come on, my own sweet son, even so,
 And homeward fast now let us go.

Isaac.

By my faith, father, thereto I agree!
 I had never such good will to go home,
 And to speak with my dear mother!

Abraham.

Ah, Lord of Heaven, I thank thee!
 For now I may lead home with me
 Isaac, my young son so free,
 The gentlest child above all other,
 This may I avow full heartily.

Now, go we forth, my blessed son.

Isaac.

I assent, father, and let us go,
 For, by my troth, once home, why then,
 I would never go out like this again.
 I pray God give us grace evermore anew,
 And all those that we be beholden to!

[*Abraham and Isaac go. The Doctor enters.*]

Doctor.

Lo, now, sovereigns and sirs, we have showed for
 example

This solemn story to great and small,
 It is a good lesson for learned and simple,
 And for the wisest of us all,
 Without whipping, God wot!

For this story showeth you clear 440
 How to our full power here,
 We should keep God's commandments and murmur
 not.

Think ye, sirs, if God sent an angel,
 And commanded you your child to slay,
 By your truth, is there any of you 445
 That would either repine or rebel straightway?
 How think ye now, sirs? I think there be
 Three or four or more hereby —
 And these women that weep so sorrowfully
 When that their children from them die 450
 (As is law of kind).

It is but folly, ye well may trow,
 Against God to murmur or grief to show,
 For ye shall never see him mischiefed, well I know!
 By land or water, bear this in mind! 455

And murmur not against our Lord God,
 In wealch or woe, whatsoever he send,
 Though low ye be bowed beneath his rod,
 For when he so willeth, he may it amend,
 If his commandments with true hearts ye keep without
 fail, 460

As this story may serve you to show and forewarn,
 And him faithfully serve, while ye be sound and hale,
 That ye may please God both even and morn.
 Now Jesu, that wore the crown of thorn,
 Bring us all to heaven's bliss! 465

FINIS.

The Second Shepherds' Play

THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PLAY

FROM THE TOWNELEY CYCLE

[THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PLAY, justly famous for its intrinsic merit and historical importance (as already explained in the *Introduction*), derives its name from the fact that it is the second of two "Shepherds'" or Nativity plays in the Towneley, or Wakefield, cycle. It has been printed by William Marriott, 1838, the Surtees Society, 1836 (the name of the editor is not given); by England, with notes by Pollard, in the *Publications of the Early English Text Society*, 1897; separately in part by Pollard in his *English Miracle Plays, Moralities, and Interludes* (3d edition, 1898); with critical revision and with helpful emendations by Manly in his *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama*, 1897; by Hemingway in *English Nativity Plays, Yale Studies in English*, 38, 1909; in "Everyman" with other Interludes including *Eight Miracle Plays*, "Everyman's Library" (no date given; general editor, Ernest Rhys; names of editors or translators of the individual plays not given). The best text for the student's use, presenting a critical interpretation of the standard text of England, is Manly's. Though Professor Manly's notes, to be included in the forthcoming third volume, are not yet published, his text itself clarifies, or at least aids the student by recording a definite opinion upon, various difficult passages. A number remain dubious, or unsolved, the solution of