

O Scribe, has Israel ever heard
That such a King should come ?
Have Israel's prophets said the word,
Or are her sages dumb ?

[Scribe unrolls a parchment scroll and reads slowly :]

From Bethlehem, the prophets tell,
Shall come the King of Israel.

[Herod turns to the Queen and is evidently alarmed. Consternation seizes the guests, who discuss the matter, one with another. Herod stands and addresses the Three Wise Men.]

To Bethlehem haste and go ;
And when ye find the King,
Bear me back word, that I may so
Prepare myself, and bring
My costliest treasures to His feet,
My sceptre and my crown,
And do such homage, as is meet,
To one from Heaven sent down.

[The Wise Men make their reverence to the King and depart. Herod leads the Queen out past the guests who do obeisance.]

HEROD

Come, Queen, be not cast down,
I still am Israel's Lord ;

[Whispering in her ear,]

This Child shall never wear the crown,
While Herod holds the sword.