



The holly and the ivy

Trad. English

Allegretto

1. The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.
*The rising of the sun,
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.*
2. The holly bears a blossom
As white as lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour.
The rising of the sun (etc.)
3. The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.
The rising of the sun (etc.)
4. The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas day in the morn.
The rising of the sun (etc.)
5. The holly bears a bark
As bitter as the gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.
The rising of the sun (etc.)
6. The holly and the ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.
The rising of the sun (etc.)

This folk carol originates in medieval times when holly and ivy were linked with good and evil; here holly is used as a symbol for Jesus's birth and crucifixion. The refrain ('The rising of the sun') was probably added in the eighteenth century when the carol was printed as a broadside ballad to be sold on the streets of Birmingham.