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# “LO, HOW A ROSE E’ER BLOOMING” BY UNKNOWN (1599)

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*Wikipedia* - “Es ist ein Ros entsprungen’ (lit., “A rose has sprung up”), is a Christmas carol and Marian Hymn of German origin. It is most commonly translated in English as “Lo, how a rose e'er blooming”, and is sometimes known as “A Spotless Rose” or “Behold a Rose of Judah”. The rose in the text is a symbolic reference to the Virgin Mary, and the hymn makes reference to the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah which in Christian interpretation foretell the Incarnation of Christ, and to the Tree of Jesse, a traditional symbol of the lineage of Jesus. Because of its prophetic theme, the song is popular during the Christian season of Advent. The hymn has its roots in an unknown author prior to the 17th century. It first appeared in print in 1599 and has since been published with a varying number of verses and in several different translations. **It is most commonly sung to a melody which was harmonized by the German composer Michael Praetorius<sup>1</sup> in 1609.**”

**Musical performances:** The King’s Singers, *Christmas Presence* (2017); Sting, *If On a Winter’s Night* (2009); Chanticleer in *Christmas with Chanticleer & Dawn Upshaw* (2001), a setting by Hugo Distler,<sup>2</sup> the “Chorale”.

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<sup>1</sup> *Britannica Online* - “**Michael Praetorius**, original name **Michael Schultheiss**, (born February 15?, 1571, Creuzburg, Thuringia [Germany]—died February 15, 1621, Wolfenbüttel, Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel), German music theorist and composer whose *Syntagma musicum* (1614–20) is a principal source for knowledge of 17th-century music and whose settings of Lutheran chorales are important examples of early 17th-century religious music.” And, **Praetorius, Michael (1571–1621)**. A German Lutheran music scholar and composer of \*hymn tunes and settings, including “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” and “Good Christian Men, Rejoice!” [Brett Scott Provance, *Pocket Dictionary of Liturgy & Worship*, The IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 103.]

<sup>2</sup> *Wikipedia*: “**Hugo Distler (24 June 1908 – 1 November 1942)** was a German organist, choral conductor, teacher and composer.”

## TEXT (TRANSLATED BY THEODORE BAKER)<sup>3</sup>

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Lo,<sup>4</sup> how<sup>5</sup> a rose e'er blooming,  
From tender stem hath sprung.  
Of Jesse's lineage coming,  
As men of old have sung;  
It came, a flow'ret bright,  
Amid the cold of winter,  
When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
The Rose I have in mind,  
With Mary we behold it,  
The virgin mother kind;  
To show God's love aright,  
She bore to men a Savior,  
When half spent was the night.

O Flower, whose fragrance tender  
With sweetness fills the air,  
Dispel with glorious splendour  
The darkness everywhere;  
True man, yet very God,  
From Sin and death now save us,  
And share our every load.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.lyricsforchristmas.com/christmas-carols/lo-how-a-rose-eer-blooming/>.

<sup>4</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the interjection “**Lo!**” – “†(a) In early use, an interjection of vague meaning, corresponding approximately to the modern O! or Oh! *Obsolete*. (b) Used to direct attention to the presence or approach of something, or to what is about to be said; = Look! See! Behold!”

<sup>5</sup> “**how**” – A lot contained in this adverb, modifying the verb “blooming.” It doesn't say “Lo, that, or when, etc. “How” directs our attention, then, not to the existence of an action, or where it takes place, but to the mode of that verb, the manner in which the doing is done. **In other words, the poem begins by calling our attention to the way a “rose is ever blooming”, how it blooms.**