

The Famous Freston Mummers

present

# The Antrobus Soul-Caking Mummers' Play

cast in order of appearance

Letter In  
King George  
Black Prince  
Mary  
Quack Doctor  
Derry Doubt  
Beelzebub  
Wild Horse and Driver

*[The play starts with all the cast singing]*

Here come one, two three jolly good hearty lads and we're all in one mind,  
For this night we've come a souling good nature to find.  
For this night we've come a souling as it doth appear,  
And it's all that we are souling for is your ale and strong beer.

And the next that steps up is Lord Nelson you see,  
With a bunch of blue ribbon tied down to his knee,  
And the start on his bosom like silver doth shine,  
And I hope you will remember that it's soul caking time.

And the next that steps up is a miser you see,  
He wears his old rags to every degree,  
And when he does sell them, he sells them so dear,  
That no-one will buy them until this time next year.

*[Letter In knocks on the door and enters the house or inn]*

*Letter In*                      Now ladies and gentleman, light a fire and strike a light,  
For in this house there's going to be a dreadful fight  
Between King George and the Black Prince,  
And I hope King George will win.  
Whether he wins, loses, fight or falls,  
We'll do our best to please you all.

*[Letter In goes out and King George comes in]*

*King George*                      In comes I, the champion bold,  
I've won 10,000 pounds in gold,  
'Twas I who fought the fire dragon and brought him to the slaughter,

And by these means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.  
I've travelled the whole world round and round,  
But never a man of my equal found.  
If you don't believe these words I say,  
Step in, Black Prince, and clear the way.

*[Enter Black Prince]*

*Black Prince* In come I, Black Prince of Paradise, born of high renown,  
I've come to take King George's life and courage down,  
If that be he who standeth there, who slew my master's son and heir,  
If that be he of royal blood,  
I'll make it flow like Noah's flood.

*King George* Ah ! Ah ! Mind what thou sayest.

*Black Prince* What I say, I mean.

*King George* Stand back, thou black Morocco dog ! or by my sword thou'll die.  
I'll pierce thy body full of holes and make thy buttons fly.

*Black Prince* How canst thou make my body full of holes and make my buttons  
fly?  
When my body is made of iron,  
My fingers and toes of double joints,  
I challenge thee to yield!  
Prepare!

*[They fight and Black Prince falls dead. Enter Mary.]*

*Mary* Oh ! King George ! What hast thou done ?  
Thou's killed and slain my only son, my only heir,  
See how he lies dead and bleeding there !

*King George* Well, Mary, he challenged me to fight,  
Better to fight than to die.  
Ten pounds for a doctor, five for a quack !  
If you don't believe these words I say,  
Step in Quack Doctor and clear the way.

*[Enter Quack Doctor]*

*Quack Doctor* In come I, who never cometh yet,  
The best quack doctor you can get.  
Here I come from the continent to cure this man King George has  
slain.

*Mary* How camest thou to be a doctor ?

*Quack Doctor* By my travels.

*Mary* And where hast thou travelled ?

*Quack Doctor* Icaly, Picaly, France and Spain,  
Three times out to the West Indies  
And back to old England to cure diseases again.

*Mary* And what diseases canst thou cure ?

*Quack Doctor* All Sorts.

*Mary* And what's all sorts ?

*Quack Doctor* All sorts; the Hump, the Grump, the Ger, the Gout,  
The pain within and the pain without.  
In my bag I've got spectacles to blind humblebees,  
Crutches for lame mice, plasters for broken backed  
earwigs. I've pills and I've powders for all kinds of aches,  
including headache, earache, also cold shakes.  
I've lotions and I've motions, also some fine notions  
that have carried my fame far wide over five oceans.

*Mary* And what are thy fees to cure my son ?

*Quack Doctor* Five pounds, Mary, but you being a decent woman, I'll  
only charge you ten.

*Mary* Well, cure him !

*[The Quack Doctor talks to the Black Prince]*

*Quack Doctor* Here, John, take three sips from this bottle down thy thrittle throttle.  
Now arise, and fight thy battle.

*Mary* Thou silly man, as green as grass, the dead man never stirs.

*Quack Doctor* Oy! Mary, I quite forgot, I took the right bottle off the  
wrong cork. I have another little bottle here in my  
inside ? - no, outside ? - somewhere round the backside  
pocket, which will soon bring him to life again.

*[The Quack Doctor stoops and gives another drink, Black Prince stirs]*

*Black Prince* Oh ! my back !

*Mary* What ails thy back, my son ?

*Black Prince* My back is broken,  
My heart is confounded,  
Knocked out of seven centuries into fourteen score,  
Which has never been known in Old England before.

*Quack Doctor* Here, John, take three drops of this down thy thrittle throttle,  
Now arise and fight thy battle.

*[King George and Black Prince fight again, Enter letter In]*

*Letter In* Lay down your sword and rest  
For peace and quietness is the best.  
He who fights and runs away  
Lives to fight another day.  
If you don't believe these words I say,  
Step in, Derry Doubt, and clear the way.

*[Derry Doubt dances in]*

*Derry Doubt* In come little Derry Doubt,  
With my shirt lap hanging out,  
Five yards in and five yards out  
Out goes little Derry Doubt.

*[Derry Doubt dances in and dances out]*

If you don't believe these words I say,  
Step in Beelzebub, and clear the way.

*Beelzebub*

In come be-i-l-ze-bub,  
On my shoulder I carry my club,  
In my hand a dripping pan,  
And I reckon myself a jolly old man.  
With a rin-tin-tin, I sup more drink,  
I'll drink a pot dry with any man.  
I've just done six months in gaol for making a whip crack  
out of a mouse's tail.  
Early Monday morning, late Saturday night,  
I saw a 10,000 miles away a house just of sight.  
The door projected backwards, the front was at the back.  
It stood alone between two more and the walls was  
whitewashed black.  
If you don't believe these words I say,  
Step in Wild Horse, and clear the way.

*[Enter Wild Horse and Driver]*

*Driver*

In comes Dick and all his men,  
He's come to see you once again.  
He was once alive, but now he's dead,  
He's nothing but a poor old horse's head.  
Stand around Dick, and show yourself !  
Now, ladies and gentleman, just view around,  
See whether you've seen a better horse on any ground.  
He's double ribbed, sure footed, and a splendid horse in a gears.  
And ride him if you can !  
He's travelled high, he's travelled low,  
He's travelled all through frost and snow,  
He's travelled the land of Ikerty Pikkery,  
Where there's neither land nor city;  
Houses thatched with pancakes,  
Walls built with penny loaves,  
Pig puddings for bell ropes, and black puddings growing  
on apple trees;  
Little pigs running about with knives and forks in their backs,  
Crying out, "Who'll eat Men ?"  
He's a very fine horse, he's of a very fine mould,  
We've got to keep him clothed to save him from the cold.  
If you look down this horse's mouth, you'll see holes in his socks.  
This horse was bred in Seven Oaks,  
The finest horse e'er fed on oats;  
He's won the Derby and the Qaks,  
And now he pulls an old milk-float.  
But that's not all this horse's history !  
Oh no ! He's as many rinkles and jinkles in his head as  
there are furrows in an acre of new ploughed land. His  
ears are made out of a lady's pocket book, his tongue  
from an old box hat, and his tail from a tachin end.  
Stand round, Dick !  
As I was going round Frandley Brow the other day, this  
horse broke loose, ran into a lady's parlour, broke all  
the glass wheelbarrows, wooded fire-irons. Now I  
ask you all to open your hearts to buy Dick a new sprung  
cart. Not one for him to pull, oh dear, no ! but for him to  
ride in. If you don't believe these words I say, ask those  
chaps outside there. They're better liars than I am.

*[Song - to the tune Flanagan's Band]*

*All sing*

Oh! for now our play is ended and we can no longer stay,  
But with your kind permission, we will call another day.

*Finish*

It's a credit to old England and the boys of the Antrobus gang.

#### Postscript:

The script for this play was taken from a book (title unknown) found in the Vaughan Williams library at the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London, NW1 7AY. The full title of the play was given as "Antrobus, Cheshire, Soul-Caking Play. Hero-Combat" credited to Alex Helm: Cheshire Folk Drama, 1968, 13-21. The text preceding the play read as follows:

"Of the many versions formerly existing in Cheshire, this is the only one still traditionally performed. Its time of appearance is All Souls and the performers dress according to character. Its similarity to the Pace-egg versions, both in song and text, is noticeable, though here the characters of the song are reduced to two, neither of whom appear in the action proper. The main action largely follows the dialogue of the chapbooks, apart from the 'Female' lamenter, but when the purely traditional characters appear in the *Quete*, there is a reversion to the nonsense lines of the traditional versions. Beelzebub has the topsy-turvy lines found elsewhere, and after the *Land of Cockayne* extract, the Wild Horse's Driver makes some purely topical allusions. The begging is centred on the appearance of the Horse, and its purpose is to prepare for his retirement. It is very similar to the Old Horse Ceremonies of Derbyshire and elsewhere, where the function was to beg with a similar hobby-horse, but without dramatic action. The final song was probably one familiar to the performers of the time as an added inducement to generosity"

The footnotes made comment to the description of the making of the horse not being clear. Also that the music for the final song was not collected, but presumable 'Flanagan's Band' is an error for 'Macnamara's Band'.

#### Music:

The first song is an adaptation of the "Peace-Egging Song, No. 1", music and lyrics being available in a book entitled "English Country Songs" (see reference). This song may also be heard on a record called "Frost and Fire" by The Watsonsons.

#### Reference Books:

English Country Songs  
Lucy E. Broadwood and J.A. Fuller Maitland, M.A., F.S.A.  
J.B. Cramer & Co., Ltd.  
99 St, Martin's Lane,  
London,  
W.C.2

#### Reference Records/CD's

Frost and Fire - A Calendar of Ritual and Magical Songs  
The Watsonsons  
Topic Records Ltd,  
50 Stroud Green Road,  
London,  
N4 3F.

#### Performance history:

Yet to be performed.