

The Famous Freston Mummers

present

# The Freston Mummers' Play

cast in order of appearance

The Squire  
Saint George  
Bold Slasher (The Turkish Knight)  
The Doctor  
Beelzebub  
Little Devil Doubt  
The Driver

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

*[Chorus]*                We are good actors bold  
                              Never came on stage before  
                              And we will do our best  
                              And the best can do no more.

The first to come on like a ranting young man  
He conquers wherever he goes  
He's sworn by his enemies to be controlled  
And his name it is gallant Saint George.

*[Chorus]*

The next to come on is the Bold Turkish Knight  
He was the first breeder of strife  
If you had been here instead of Saint George  
You'd be glad to get off with your life.

*[Chorus]*

*Squire*                    Open the door and let us in  
                              We hope your favour we shall win  
                              We'll do our best to please you all  
                              Now acting time has come  
                              And we do here appear.

A time for mirth and merriment  
For all spectators here.  
We are not the ragged sort,  
But some of royal trim  
And if you don't believe the words I say  
Step in Saint George and clear the way.

*[Enter Saint George]*

*Saint George*                Here comes I, Saint George  
That man of courage bold.  
If any man's blood runs hot  
I'm sure to make it cold.

I slew the fearful dragon, and brought him to the slaughter,  
And by that means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.  
Where is the man that bids me stand,  
I'll cut him down with my courageous hand ?

*[Enter Bold Slasher]*

*Bold Slasher*                Here comes I, Bold Slasher, that Turkish Knight,  
Come from the Turkish land to fight.  
My body is made of iron, my head of steel,  
My arms and legs are beaten brass;  
No man can make me feel.

*[They fight and Bold Slasher falls to the ground]*

*Squire*                        Saint George, Saint George what has thou done ?  
Thou hast gone and killed my only son.  
Is there a doctor to be found  
To cure this man of his deadly wound ?

*[Enter the Doctor]*

*Doctor*                        Yes ! There is a doctor to be found, who can cure this man of  
his deadly wound.

*Squire*                        What can'st thou cure then Doctor ?

*Doctor*                        The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout  
Pains within and pains without.

*[The Doctor examines Bold Slasher and proclaims...]*

Why, I cured a magpie of a toothache once.

*Squire*                        How did you do that then Doctor ?

*Doctor*                        I cut off its head and threw the body in a ditch.  
Why, were this old woman dead ten years  
I could bring her back in the twinkling of an eye.

*Squire*                        Where did you learn these skills then Doctor ?

*Doctor*                        Italy, Titaly, High France and Spain  
All the way to Shotley and back again.

*Squire*                        Show us your skills then Doctor.

*Doctor*                        In my inside, outside jacket, waistcoat pocket  
I have some pills to cure all ills.

*[The Doctor gives Bold Slasher an over sized pill which Slasher spits out and does not recover]*

Ah ha !

*[The Doctor draws out a large bottle from his bag]*

A little to the eye,  
A little to the thigh,  
A little to the stringbone of the heart.  
Rise up Bold Slasher and play thy part.

*[Bold Slasher rises off the floor]*

*Bold Slasher*                      Saint George, Saint George pardon me, pardon me  
And from this land give me leave to flee.

*Saint George*                      Go home, go home, thou curly Turkish Knight.  
Go back to thine own country and learn to fight.  
Tell them all across the sea  
We'll fight a thousand men like thee.

*[Bold slasher sidles off, gesticulating at Saint George]*

*[Enter Beelzebub]*

*Beelzebub*                      In comes I, Beelzebub  
Over my shoulder I carry my club  
In my hand a dripping pan  
Don't you think I'm a jolly old man.  
If you don't believe the words I say  
Step in Devil Doubt and clear the way.

*[Enter Devil Doubt]*

*Devil Doubt*                      In comes I, little Devil Doubt  
If you don't give me money  
I'll sweep you out.  
Money I want and money I crave  
If you don't give me money  
I'll sweep you to the grave.  
And if you can't believe these words I say  
Step in Wild Horse and clear the way.

*[Enter Wild Horse and Driver]*

*Driver*                              In comes Ned from off the fen  
He's come to see you once again.  
He was once alive but now he's dead,  
So now he's nothing but a poor old horse's head.

Stand up Ned !

This horse has travelled high, he's travelled low  
He's travelled both through frost and snow.  
He's travelled where houses are thatched with pancakes  
Streets paved with dumplings and good old beefsteaks.

Stand up Ned !

This horse has an eye like a hawk  
A neck like a Swan  
He has a tongue like a ladies pocket book  
So read it if you can.

Stand up Ned !

Why, going down yon hill last night  
Poor old Ned, fell down and broke both shafts off  
Now ladies and gents, open your hearts and see what you can give  
Towards Neds' new cart, not for him to draw but for me to ride in.

Stand up Ned !

This horse has only one leg  
And is obliged to beg  
And what he begs it is but small  
But is obliged to serve us all.

Stand up Ned !

*[All the cast join in the final song]*

There's one, two, three jolly lads all in one mind  
We have come a pace-egging and we hope you prove kind  
And we hope you'll prove kind with your eggs and strong beer  
For we'll come no more annoy you until the next year.

Come ladies and gentlemen sat by the fire  
Put your hands in your pockets and give us our desire  
Put your hand in your pockets and see us alright  
If you give nowt, we'll take nowt  
Farewell and goodnight.

#### Postscript:

This play has been performed by the Famous Freston Mummers since about 1982. The text is believed to have been derived, by one of the Freston Mummers, from various plays 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.

There was also an earlier version of the play with a Father Xmas character replacing the Driver, the part was short and read as follows:

<i>Father Xmas</i>	In come I, old Father Christmas Welcome, or welcome not. I hope old Father Christmas Will never be forgot.
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#### Music:

The first song is an adaptation of the "Sword Dance Song", music and lyrics being available in a book entitled "English Country Songs" (see reference). The second song is a cut down version of the "Peace-Egging Song, No. 1", music and lyrics also to be found in the above mentioned book. 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:

The mainstay of the Mummers.