

The Famous Freston Mummers

present

The Netley Abbey Mummers' Play

cast in order of appearance

First Xmas Boy
Father Xmas
King George
Turkey Snipe
The Doctor
Beelzebub
Poor and Mean
Glutton
Scotch and Scars
Fat and Fine
Jack John
Sweep
Twing Twang
Tipton Slasher
Johnny Jack

[Enter First Xmas Boy - reciting while walking round]

First Xmas Boy

Ladies and gentlemen, spectators all, I hope you are all willing
to hear the royal act, the royal act and our treseter is yet but young.
We are all young hands we never act before,
We do the best we can, we cannot do no more.
So step in old Father Christmas from the door.

[Enter Father Xmas]

Father Xmas

In comes I, old Father Christmas
Welcome or welcome not,
I hope old Father Christmas
Will never be forgot.
Room, room, ladies and gentlemen, room I to obtain,
After me steps King George and all his noble train.
For in this room there shall soon a most dreadful battle that ever
was known betwixt King George and Turkey Snipe.
Enter in King George and boldly clear the way,
For old Father Christmas got a short time to stay.

[Enter King George]

King George

In come I, King George,
King George that valiant man with courage bold,
'Twas I that won five crowns of gold.

'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought him to a slaughter,
And by that fight I hope to win the Queen of Egypt's daughter.

[Enter Turkey Snipe]

Turkey Snipe In comes I, Turkey Snipe,
Just come from Turkey Land old England for to fight,
I'll fight thee King Jarge that valent man,
That valent man of courage bold,
Let the blood be ever so hot
I'll shortly draw it cold.

King George Ah ! ha ! my little man
You talks brave and bold,
Just like some of these little lads I've been told.
Pull out your purse and pay,
Pull out your sword and fight.
Satisfaction I will have
Before I leave this night.

Turkey Snipe No purse will I pull out.
No money will I pay,
But my sword I will draw out
And have satisfaction of thee this day.
Battle, battle, battle I will call,
And see which on the ground shall fall.

King George Battle, Battle I will cry,
To see which on the ground shall lie.

[They fight. King George slays his opponent]

King George Ladies and gentlemen all
Just see what miracles I have done.
I have cut thy father Abraham down
The like ever seen.
Pray ! Pray ! is there a doctor to be found
To cure this noble Turk lie bleeding on the ground.

[Enter Doctor]

Doctor Oh ! yes ! there is a doctor to be found
To cure this noble Turk lie bleeding on the ground.

King George What can you cure, doctor ?

Doctor I can cure all diseases;
I can cure the hitch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout,
Raging pain both inside and out.
If the devil's in a man, I'll fetch him out.
Give me an old woman four score and ten,
With scarcely a stump of a tooth in her head,
I will make her young and plump again.
More than this. If she falls downstairs and breaks her neck,
I will settle the charge nothing for my fees.
Recollect I am not like one of those bony back doctors
Who runs about from door to door telling a pack of lies,
I will shortly raise the dead before your eyes.

King George Where have you been learning all these fine things, doctor ?

Doctor I've been to England, Ireland, Scotland and Dover,
I have travelled the wide world over.

King George What is your fee, doctor ?

Doctor Ten guineas is my fee, thee being a poor man,
Half of that I'll take of thee.

King George Take that and cure him.

Doctor I've a little bottle in the waistband of my trousers
Called the Oakham, smokum, altigam pain.
I drop one to his head, one to his heart,
Rise thou noble Turk, and take thy part.

Turkey Snipe Now see, King George, I have rose again.
How long have I been on that horrid floor ?
I've been hurried and scurried,
I have been dragged from door to door.
Is there a man can tell a task ?
Pick me up a stranger,
Knock me down a blow,
Wherever I have been if the ground had not caught me
I do not know.

[Enter Beelzebub]

Beelzebub In comes I, little Tom Beelzebub,
On me'ed I carries me nob,
In my 'and a drippin' pan-
Don't you think I'm a funny old man ?

[Enter Poor and Mean]

Poor and Mean In comes I, Poor and Mean,
Hardly worthy to be seen.
Christmas comes but once a year,
When it comes it brings good cheer.
Roast beef, plum pudding, mince pie.
Who likes that any better and I ?

[Enter Glutton]

Glutton In comes I, Glutton,
I can eat roast beef, bacon, pork or mutton.
Although they call me poor and mean,
My old sword will cut fat or lean.

[Enter Scotch and Scars]

Scotch and Scars In come I, Scotch and Scars,
I've just come from those horrid wars.
'Twas he and I and seven more,
Fought the battle of eleven score.
Many a battle have I been in,
Many a battle have I seen,
Fighting for King George our king.

[Enter Fat and Fine]

Fat and Fine In comes I, Fat and Fine,

Half starved, stone blind,
Ricked back and broken mind,
One eye out and t'other in,
Don't you think I'm a funny old man ?

[Enter Jack John]

Jack John In comes I, little Jack John,
If any man wants to fight, let him come on.
I will hack him, I'll cut him,
And after I'm done,
I will fight the best man sits under the sun.
My head is made of brass,
Body lined with steel,
Brass for my knuckle bones,
I will fight you on the field.

[Enter Sweep]

Sweep In comes I, Sweep,
All I gets I keep.

[Enter Twing Twang]

Twing Twang In comes I, Twing Twang,
I'm the lieutenant of all you press gang.
I come to press all you bold mummers
To send you to sea to fight the French,
And drive the Russians right away.
If you had not like to believe what I have to say,
Step in Tipton Slasher and boldly clear the way.

[Enter Tipton Slasher]

Tipton Slasher In come I, Tipton Slasher,
Tipton Slasher is my name.
My broad sword spear buckled by my side,
I am bound to win the game.

[Enter Johnny Jack]

Johnny Jack In comes I, little Johnny Jack,
With my wife and family at my back.
Although my family is but small
I have to work hard to find bread and cheese for them all.
When I walk, I walk abroad;
When I sit, I sit at ease.
Ladies and Gentlemen, give the Christmas Boys what you please.
A jug of your Christmas ale will make us all merry and sing.
Money in my Christmas box is a very fine thing.

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 chapter was entitled "The Jolly Jacks in Hampshire" and the full title of the play was given as "Netley Abbey (Hampshire) Mummers' Play" credited to Ordish Collection, Folk-Lore Society, from MS. S. Peppler, Esq., 9.1.1893. The text preceding the play read as follows:

"Hampshire is a county particularly rich in examples of the play, and this particular version is one of the better texts. The photograph (plate i) of the players illustrates clearly the costumes which were worn, and which so effectively disguise the performers as to ensure their complete anonymity.

The number of characters who follow the main action of the play are rather more numerous than usual, and some of their names suggest that they are brought about by a hazy recollection of the Seven Deadly Sins. The Tipton Slasher was a celebrated prize fighter of more than a hundred years ago, and it would be interesting to know how he came to be remembered in this small Hampshire village. 'Turkey Snipe' is familiar corruption of 'Turkish Knight' (see also the Chithurst play). No explanation of the word 'treseter' in the first speech occurs easily, unless 'treasurer' is intended."

Music:

Unknown.

Reference Books

None.

Reference Records/CD's

None.

Performance history:

Yet to be performed.