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:

*Father Xmas* In come I, old Father Christmas

Welcome, or welcome not.

I hope old Father Christmas

Will never be forgot.

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 Watersons.

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 Watersons

Topic Records Ltd,

50 Stroud Green Road,

London,

N4 3F

Performance history:

The mainstay of the Mummers.