

The Plough Monday Play

Performed at Hooton Pagnell, nr. Doncaster

- FOOL Room, room brave gallants, give us room to sport,
For in this room we wish for to resort,
Resort, and to repeat you our merry rhyme,
For remember, good sirs, this is New Year time.
So we are come to act our merry New Year here
At the sound of the trumpets and the beat of the drum.
Make room, brave gentlemen, and let our actors come.
- OMNES We are the merry actors that traverse the street,
We are the merry actors that fight for our meat.
We are the merry actors that show pleasant play.
- FOOL Step in, St. George, thou champion, and clear the way.
- ST. GEORGE I am St. George who from Old England sprung,
My famous name throughout the world hath rung,
Many deeds and wonders have I made known,
And made the tyrants tremble on their throne.
I followed a fair lady to a giant's gate,
Confined in dungeon deep to meet her fate,
Then I resolved, with true knight-errantry,
To burst the door and set the prisoner free,
When a giant almost struck me dead,
But by my valour I cut off his head.
I've searched the world round and round,
But a man to equal me I have never found.
- SLASHER I am a valiant soldier, and Slasher is my name,
With sword and buckler by my side I hope to win the game.
And for to fight with me I see thou art not able,
So with my trusty sword soon I will thee disable.
- ST. GEORGE Disable! Disable! It lies not in thy power,
For with my glittering sword soon will I thee devour.
Stand off, Slasher, and let no more be said,
For if I draw my sword I'm sure to break thy head.
- SLASHER How canst thou break my head
Since it is made of iron?
And my body's made of steel,
My hands and feet of knuckle-bone.
I challenge thee to field.
- (They fight. SLASHER falls.)*
- FOOL Alas! Alas! My chiefest son is slain,
What must I do to raise him up again?
Here he lies in the presence of you all.
A doctor! A doctor! Ten pounds for a doctor!
I'll go and fetch a doctor.

DOCTOR Here am I.

FOOL Are you the doctor?

DOCTOR Yes; that you may plainly see
By my art and activity.

FOOL Well, what's your fee to cure this man?

DOCTOR Ten pounds is my fee,
But, Jack if thou be an honest man
I'll only take five of thee.

FOOL You'll be wondrous cunning if you get any.
Well, how far have you travelled in your doctorship?

DOCTOR From Italy, Titaly, High Germany, France and Spain,
And now come to cure the diseases of Old England again.

FOOL So far and no further?

DOCTOR Oh, yes, a great deal further.

FOOL How far?

DOCTOR From the fireside cupboard, upstairs and into bed.

FOOL What diseases can you cure?

DOCTOR All sorts.

FOOL What's all sorts?

DOCTOR The itch, the stitch, the palsy and the gout.
If a man gets nineteen devils in his skull
I'll cast twenty of them out.
I have in my pockets crutches for lame ducks, spectacles for blind
 humblebees, packsaddles and panniers for grasshoppers and
 plaisters for broken-backed mice. I cured Sir Harry of a nang
 nail almost fifty-five yards long. Surely I can cure this poor
 man.
Here, Jack, take a little out of my bottle
And let it run down thy throttle.
If thou be not quite slain
Rise, Jack, and fight again.

SLASHER Oh, my back!

FOOL What's amiss with thy back?

SLASHER My back is wounded,
And my heart is confounded.
To be struck out of seven senses into four score!
The like was never seen in Old England before.

ST. GEORGE I am St. George, that noble champion bold,
 And with this my trusty sword I won ten thousand pounds in gold,
 'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter,
 and by those means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

BLACK PRINCE I am the Black Prince of Paladine born of high renown,
 Soon I will fetch St. George's courage down,
 Before St. George shall be received by me
 St. George shall die for all eternity.

ST. GEORGE Stand off, thou black Morocco dog,
 Or by my sword thou'lt die.
 I'll pierce thy body full of holes,
 And make thy buttons fly.

BLACK PRINCE Draw out thy sword and slay.
 Pull out thy purse and pay.
 For I will have recompense
 Before I go away.

ST. GEORGE Now, Prince of Paladine, where have you been,
 And what fine sights, pray, have you seen?
 Dost such a black as thee engage?
 Lay down thy sword, take up to me a spear,
 Then I'll fight thee without dread or fear.

(They fight. The BLACK PRINCE falls)

ST. GEORGE Now prince of Paladine is dead,
 And all his joys entirely fled.
 Take him and give him to the flies,
 Let him no more come near my eyes.

KING OF EGYPT I am the King of Egypt, as plainly doth appear,
 I'm come to seek my son, my only son and heir.

ST. GEORGE He is slain.

KING OF EGYPT Who did him slay? Who did him kill,
 And on this ground his precious blood did spill?

ST. GEORGE I did him slay. I did him kill,
 And on this ground his precious blood did spill.

KING OF EGYPT Cursed Christian, what is this thou'st done?
 Thou hast ruined me and slain my only son.

ST. GEORGE He gave me a challenge. No one denies it.
 How high he was, but look how low he lies.

KING OF EGYPT *(to HECTOR)* Oh, Hector, Hector, help me with speed,
 For in my life I never stood more need.

HECTOR Yes, yes, my liege, I will obey,
 And by my sword I hope to win the day.

If that be he who doth stand there
That slew my master's son and heir,
If he be sprung from royal blood,
I'll make it run like Noah's flood.

ST. GEORGE Hold, Hector. Do not be so hot,
For thou knowest not who thou'st got.
'Tis I can tame thee of thy pride
And lay thine anger too aside,
Inch thee and cut thee as small as flies,
Send thee over the sea to make mincepies,
Mincepies hot and mincepies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou'rt three days old.

HECTOR How canst thou tame me of my pride,
And lay my anger too aside,
Inch me and cut me as small as flies,
Send me over sea to make mincepies,
How canst thou send me to Black Sam before I am three days old?
Since my head is made of iron,
My body is made of steel,
My hands and feet of knuckle-bone,
I challenge thee to field.

ST. GEORGE Here comes from post old bold Ben.
Why, master, did ever I do thee any harm?

FOOL Why, master, did ever I take you to be my friend?
Thou proud saucy coxcomb, begone!

ST. GEORGE A coxcomb! I defy that name.
With a sword thou ought to be stabbed for the same.

FOOL To be stabbed is the least I fear.

ST. GEORGE *(to HECTOR)* I'll cross the water at the hour of five
And meet you there, sir, if I be alive.

BEELZEBUB Here come I, Beelzebub,
And over my shouldren I carry my club;
And in my hand a dripping-pan,
And I think myself a jolly old man.
And if you don't believe what I say,
Enter in little Johnny Jack,
And this will finish the act.

JOHNNY JACK Here come I, little Johnny Jack,
With my wife and family at my back,
My family large, but I am small,
So every little helps us all.

(Goes round with a collecting box.)

THE END