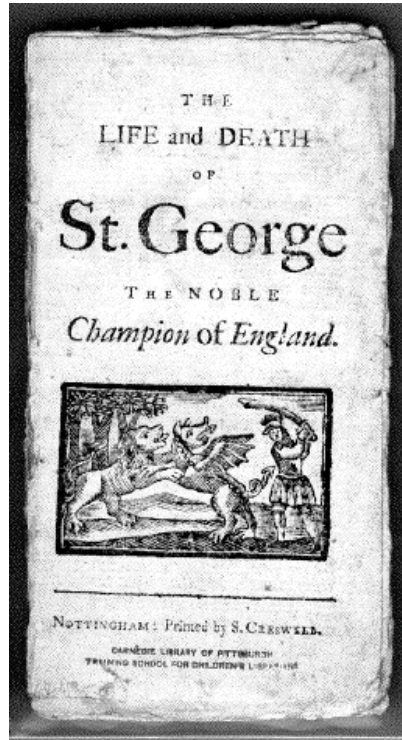


# Paper Bag Mummers Plough Plays



## Chapbook Edition

*Formatted and reprinted by Lynn Noel (Squire and Fool, Paper Bag Mummers) from online archives of the Traditional Drama Research Group, University of Sheffield, UK*

<http://www.folkplay.info>.

The Paper Bag Mummers of Arlington, Massachusetts explore traditional folkplay texts as improvisational performance and street theatre.

**Our motto: we never rehearse, we only perform!**

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## South Scarle Plough Monday Play, 1882

J.G.Holmes (1952)

### **Context:**

Location: South Scarle, Nottinghamshire, England (SK8463)

Year: Perf. before 1882

Time of Occurrence: Plough Monday

Collective Name: Plough-Bullocking, Morris Dancing

### **Source:**

[Mr.J.G.Holmes]

Plough Monday Plays

Nottinghamshire Countryside, Jan.1952, Vol.13, No.3, pp.7-8

### **Cast:**

\* Tom Fool / Bold Tom / Tommy

\* Farmer's Man

\* Lady

\* Recruiting Serjeant

\* Dame Jane

\* Beelzebub

\* Doctor

### **Text:**

[PBM Note: The first speech is taken from the [Baskervill](#) plough play, as the Fool's opening lines. We add it here as a "Room, Room" to give a speech for leading the mummers in.]

**[Fool]**

In comes I noble Antony  
As mad and as milde and as blythe  
As your old Mantle Tree,  
Make room for noble Antony  
And all his jovel company  
I have some mery mery actors stands at the door  
Some can dance and some can sing,  
If you will consent they shall come in.

*[PBM Note: "The order of going was to have two ploughlines parallel, and short sticks between at intervals - to each stick a man, for the 'horses.' Then came the 'Waggoner' driving them, with a long whip and an inflated pig's bladder on the end of the lash - next came the plough, which they trailed: a plough without wheels and ready for ploughing." - [Willoughton](#) play]*

*{Enter TOM FOOL}*

**T.F.**

In comes I, bold Tom,  
A brisk and a live young feller  
We've come to taste of your good beef and ale  
For they say its both ripe and mellow  
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen too, we're  
plough-bullocking [or morris dancing as the case may be]  
tonight, makes me so bold as to call.  
Don't take it as the end - all I've had to say;  
There's many more pretty boys and girls coming this way.

*{Enter THE. FARMER'S MAN}*

**F.M.**

In comes I who's lost me mate,  
Drooping, tears runnin' down me pate.  
Pity my condition, I do declare  
For a faithless young girl I am in despair.

## T.F.

Cheer up, young man, don't die in despair,  
Perhaps in a short time the Lady will be here.

*{Enter THE LADY singing in high falsetto}*



Be - hold the la - dy bright and gay, good for - tune and sweet charms\_\_\_\_  
So scorn - ful - ly I've thrown a - way in - to this boo - by's arms\_\_\_\_  
He swears if I don't wed with him as you shall un - der - stand



He'll sure - ly list for a sol - dier in - to some for - eign land\_\_\_\_

## L.

Behold the lady bright and gay  
Good fortune and sweet charms,  
So scornfully I've been thrown away  
Into this looby's arms.  
He swears if I don't wed with him  
As you shall understand,  
He'll surely list for a soldier  
Into some foreign land.

*{Enter RECRUITING SERJEANT}*

## R.S.

In comes I, a noble recruiting serjeant  
I've arrived here just now  
And have orders from the Queen  
To 'list all jolly fellows  
That follow horse, cart or plough  
Oh, tinkers, tailors, pedlars, nailers,  
All other men at my advance,

The more I hear the fiddle play  
The better I can dance.

**F.M.**

Well, kind serjeant, I likes your offer,  
Time with us will sweetly pass  
Dash me wig if I'll grieve any longer  
For this proud and saucy lass.

**L.**

Since my love has 'listed  
And entered volunteers  
I neither mean to sigh for him  
Nor yet shed any tears.  
I do not mean to sigh for him  
I'd have him for to know,  
I'll have another sweetheart  
And with him I will go.

**T.F.**

*{turning to Lady}*

Dost tha love me, love?

**L.**

Yes, and to my sorrow.

**T.F.**

When's to be our weddin', love?

**L.**

Tommy, love, tomorrow.

**T.F. and L.**

Tra-la-la, etc. {ad infinitum}.

*{Enter DAME JANE}*

**D.J.**

In comes I, old Dame Jane  
Neck as long as a crane,  
Dib-dabbing over the meadow.  
Once I was a blooming maid,  
Now I'm a down old widow,

*{turns to T.F.}*

Tommy lad, a long time I've sought you,  
Bur now at last I've caught you  
My love for you ne'er lasted,  
And since you called me what you did  
Tommy lad, take to your bastard.

**T.F.**

Child, Jane, it's none of mine -  
'Tis not a little bit like me.

**D.J.**

Look at its eyes, nose, mouth and chin,  
It's as much like you as ever it can grin.

**T.F.**

Who told you to bring it to me?

**D.J.**

Th' overseer of the Parish  
Said I was to bring it to the  
Biggest fool I could find -

And I thought you was him.

**T.F.**

Take it away you saucy Jane and begone!

*{Enter BEELZEBUB}*

**B.**

In comes I, old Beelzebub  
On my shoulder I carry a club  
What old woman can stand before me -

**D.J.**

I can - my head is made of iron  
My body lined with steel  
Me shins are made of knuckle bone  
And you can't make me feel.

**B.**

Well if you head is made of iron  
And your body lined with steel  
And your shins arc made of knuckle-bone  
I still can make you feel.

*{fells her and infant with his club}*

**T.F.**

Oh, Belzie, Belzie, what have you done?  
You've killed old Jane and lamed the son!  
Five pounds for a doctor.

**B.**

Ten pounds to stop away.

**T.F.**

Fifteen pounds to come in.  
Oh dear Doctor do come in.

*{Enter DOCTOR}*

**D.**

In comes I, the Doctor.

**T.F.**

You the doctor ?

**D.**

Yes, me the doctor.

**T.F.**

How came you to be a doctor?

**D.**

I've travelled through England, France and Spain  
Round the world and back again.  
And from the fireside to my grandmother's cupboard  
Where I had many a piece of pork pie  
Which made me the fine fellow I am

*{meaning look at lady of the house}*

**T F.**

Clever Doctor, try your skill.

**D**

Thanks, kind Sir, and so I will.  
I'll feel the woman's pulse

*{places hand on ankle}*



**T.F.**

Is that where you feel a pulse?

**D.**

Yes. where would you feel?

**T.F.**

Back o' the head, of course.

**D.**

*{feels back of head}*

She is not dead, she's in a trance

I'll give her a sup of my wiff-waff

Put it down her tiff-faff

If she can dance, you can sing

Then rise, old girl, we'll all begin.

*[PBM Note: Jane revives, all help her to her feet and then sing]*

**ALL TOGETHER**

[PBM Note: We will use the tune for the Somerset Wassail.]

**Wassail, O Wassail all over the town! #158**

New Oxford Book of Carols #158



Good master and good mistress  
You see our fool is gone  
We take it as our business  
To follow him along  
We thank you for civility  
And what you've giv'n us here  
Now we wish you all Goodnight  
And another Happy Year.

[chorus from the Somerset Wassail]

And it's your wassail, and it's our wassail  
And joy be to you and a jolly wassail.

Notes:

*Introduction and letter:*

MR.M.W.BARLEY'S article on Plough Monday plays aroused considerable interest amongst our readers, many of whom have sent fragments of plays performed in the villages in their childhood days, and the Editors are most grateful to these readers for their help.

The most notable contribution in the form of a complete play came from Mr.J.G.Holmes of Thurgarton whose letter we print below.

*Dear Sirs,*

*After seeing your appeal for Plough Monday traditional plays by a team of plough boys I write to say that I was one of the team of seven characters over 70 years ago. I am now 89 and was one of the characters for 3 years in succession at a little village of South Scarle, 7 miles south-east of Newark. Five generations of us lived in that village. I left there 51 years ago, but I still remember the play word for word.*

*Our team had no thresher in it. Ours was Dame Jane and her baby (doll) who was the one injured and brought to life by the doctor, who wore a top hat, black long coat and kid gloves. A clown was leader. We went to the surrounding villages at nights during the week, and our own village on Monday night. We were somebody then.*

*I should be pleased to give more details if any use to your collection, but I have no one to write it down for me. I am not quite fit or I would come to Nottingham and see you. If by chance you are coming this way call to see me. Please excuse all mistakes as I have not been to school lately.*

*Awaiting your reply.*

*yours respectfully, J.G.Holmes.*

*We did visit Mr. Holmes and heard from him and recorded the complete Scarle Plough Monday Play which we publish below. Any inaccuracies in the text of the play are due only to the dictation speed and dramatic fervour displayed by Mr.Holmes, who actually sang a great deal of it, and enjoyed the rendering of it as much as we did.*

*Description of costumes:*

## THE SCARLE PLAY

*Actors in Plough Monday Play*

- 1. Tom Fool, dressed clown fashion, odd socks odd boots, face made up red and white.*
- 2. Farmers Man in long smock, old corduroy trousers tied with string below knees.*

3. *The lady.* Long skirts, shawl, elegant hat and shoes !
4. *The Recruiting Serjeant.* Scarlet uniform of the time.
5. *Dams Jane.* Bedraggled edition of *The Lady*, skirts, shawl, old hat and carrying big doll for baby wrapped in a shawl.
6. *The Devil (or Beelzebub)* Ordinary working clothes plus inverted sack with slits made to put head and arms through. Whole of body then padded thickly with straw and string run round bottom of sack to prevent stuffing escaping.
7. *The Doctor.* Top hat, long black coat, gloves and cane.

## ***Indexer's Notes:***

No tunes were published with Mr.Holmes' text. The tune given here was collected collected from him and published separately in M.W.Barley (1953) *Plough Plays in the East Midlands, Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, Dec.1953, Vol.7, No.2, p.78.* Barley introduces the song thus:

"From South Scarle Mr.Holmes of Thurgarton, Notts., has preserved for us the tune used for the Lady's song:"

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