

The
Chapbook Mummers' Plays



A Study of the PRINTED VERSIONS of
the NORTH-WEST of ENGLAND by
ALEX HELM

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INDEX

Introduction	5
Group A. The Alexander Texts	7
Group B. Pearce's Sheffield Version	10
Group C. The Peace Egg Versions	12
Group D. Christmas Versions	14
Group E. 'Abnormal' Versions	15
Group F. The Belfast Chapbook	17
Group G. Lost Chapbooks	18
Illustrations	19
Dating	22
Provenance	24
Source of the Texts	27
The Decay of a Ceremony	30
The End-Product	32
Additional Play Chapbook	39
Check List of Known Play Chapbooks	34
<i>Alexander and the King of Egypt</i> - text No.2	40
<i>The Seven Champions</i> - text No.21	46

ILLUSTRATIONS

With the exception of the title page illustration which has been adapted and enlarged for its present purpose, all the blocks are reproduced at exactly the original size. No effort has been made to touch up the illustrations: this accounts for the obvious imperfections in some of them. The numbers refer to those in the Check List on pp.34-9.

	Title Page
Front Cover, No.10	
Fig.1 Punch, No.12	6
Fig.2 Title page, No.11	9
Fig.3 Valentine and Orson, No.19	11
Fig.4 Devil Doubt, No.11	13
Fig.5 Devil, No.11	14
Fig.6 Illustration, No.18	16
Fig.7 Beelzebub, No.22	17
Fig.8 Knight, No.8	21
Fig.9 Ali Baba Illustration, No.17	23
Fig.10 St. George, No.11	26
Fig.11 St. George, No.17	29
Fig.12 Fool, No.8	31
Fig.13 Trumpeter, No.17	33
Fig.14 St. George, No.12	45

INTRODUCTION

'The art or ritual of the folk has always been peculiarly sensitive to external influence and to the contact of what we call culture.'

R.J.E.Tiddy: *The Mummers' Play*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1923, 75.

Since interest in the Mummers' Play was awakened in the middle of the nineteenth century the origin of the texts has remained a mystery. All surviving texts seem to be late attempts to provide an acceptable verbal accompaniment for a ceremony whose original aim had been forgotten. In the type discussed here, the action concerns two champions who fight till one is killed, and then he is revived by a wonder-working quack doctor.* This action was seen by Tiddy to 'bear traces of a ritual origin',† and Sir E.K.Chambers described it as 'one of several *ludi* of the folk which involve an element of *mim-esis*'.‡ The ritual or *ludus* is a traditional revitalisation ceremony whose purpose had long been forgotten by performers and audience alike, but which was deep-rooted because it survived from primitive times, resilient enough to adapt itself to growing sophistication as the centuries passed, and tenacious enough to have persisted into modern times virtually unchanged in action though altered by being

* E.C.Cawte, Alex Helm and N.Peacock: *English Ritual Drama*, The Folk-Lore Society, London, 1967, discuss the various types of the ceremony known to exist and give a list, with bibliography, of all examples discovered.

† Tiddy: *op. cit.*, 70.

‡ E.K.Chambers: *The English Folk Play*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1933, 3.

given a stereotyped text. The country-wide similarity of these texts argues a common archetype, usually assumed to be an early chapbook, now lost, which enjoyed wide distribution and set the pattern now familiar. Its existence is, however, hypothetical. During the eighteenth century the text caught the attention of printers, who saw in it material of some commercial value and who began the printing of what are known as chapbook versions. Although none of those surviving can be the 'missing' chapbook, all may be its descendants. Printing continued into the twentieth century with a variety of texts conveying the virtually unchanged action.

A list of the known chapbook editions is given in the Check List at the end. The number is small, as could be expected of ephemeral printing, and four known versions cannot be traced. They fall naturally into seven groups, differing in their action, the time of year when the publishers intended them to be used, and their traditional content. The titles given in the Check List are taken exactly from the various title pages of the chapbooks examined for this study, but for the sake of brevity in the text, they will be identified by their numbers in the List. Finally, in this study, the word 'traditional' is used to describe the mummers whose performance did not depend on the printed chapbook versions, but who passed on their local variant by word of mouth.



Fig. 1 Fool from No.12. See p.19.

GROUP A THE ALEXANDER TEXTS

This group is important because it contains the oldest complete text known to exist. The versions are identical: differences in spelling and arrangement show that the 1788 chapbook was a re-set of that published in 1771. It is difficult to decide whether these versions were used as acting scripts, since the title '..... A mock play as it is acted by the Mummers every Christmas', is ambiguous, implying either that the Mummers actually used them or that they were printed as curiosities. There may be some significance in their place of publication, Newcastle upon Tyne, for it and Whitehaven, where No.3 was published, were at that time important centres for the publication of chapbooks of all kinds, whose printers might be expected to be on the look-out for new titles for their series. Brand says that he saw, sometime before 1777, a printed version amongst a collection of ballads in the office of T.Saint, Newcastle.* This was presumably No.1. Some practised writer seems to have prepared them for publication since they are divided into Acts and Scenes, divisions which are extremely rare amongst traditional versions. It is probable that the publishers took the local traditional lines and edited them for publication, since Brand makes it clear that the mock play was actually performed, and adds:

'..... the *Stile* of them all is so *puerile* and *simple*, that I cannot think it would be worth the Pains to invade the Hawkers' Province, by exhibiting any Specimens of them.'¶

It is fair to say that neither resembles any surviving traditional text from the area. They contain lines which would be considered 'coarse' today, and which have not been traced in any other version, traditional or chapbook. In describing his cures, the Doctor said:

Come in you ugly, nasty, dirty Whore,
Whose age is threescore Years or more

and the King of Egypt finally insults Alexander by saying:

Thy teeth are no whiter than the charcoal,
And thy Breath stinks like the Devil's A-se H-le (*sic*).

* John Brand: *Observations on Popular Antiquities*: . . ., T.Saint, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1777, 185.

¶ *ibid.*

Otherwise the dialogue is unremarkable.

The action opens (Act I, Scene I) with a Prologue spoken by Alexander which introduces a Noble King, a Doctor and Old Dives, a miser. In Scene II an unnamed character calls for room and introduces the King of Egypt who, in turn, brings forward his son, Prince George. The latter delivers a vaunt and Alexander, calling George 'Slacker' (more usually 'Slasher'), challenges him to fight. In Act II, Scene I they fight; George is wounded and Egypt, calling Alexander 'a cursed Christian', summons Sambo to help. Whether the typesetter made an error here is uncertain, but the reply is given by the Doctor who says that he is willing but unable as his sword point is broken, whereupon the Doctor is summoned. He describes his cures and revives George at the beginning of Scene II. George immediately quarrels inconclusively with Alexander and the argument is continued by the latter and Egypt. In Scene III these two fight, Egypt is killed and George laments him. The conclusion of the text is a polite begging appeal.

These texts show a blend of tradition and 'literature': the death and resurrection are the original point of the ceremony, but why no cure follows the second fight is unknown. Perhaps having satisfied tradition with the one cure, the compiler may have been reluctant to strain credulity further by adding another. Characters common to traditional versions are the King of Egypt, George and the Doctor: 'Slasher' is normally George's opponent and to call George by this name implies some doubling of parts. Old Dives, who appears in the 'Prologue', has no part in the action and possibly coupled the part of George with taking the collection at the end. Doubling may also account for the Doctor/Sambo confusion, for it could reduce the number of performers thereby increasing the individual share of the proceeds. Begging became the aim of traditional ceremonies very early and must be considered one of the chief factors which kept them alive long after their original purpose was forgotten.

No original of No.3 is known, but a correspondent to Hone* gives

* William Hone: *The Every-Day Book*, II, Hunt and Clarke, London, 1826, cols. 1645-1648.

a version of the the text which omits the four 'coarse' lines quoted on page 7. He adds that it was acted in Whitehaven at the time of writing. The arrangement of a typescript in the Manning MSS* suggests that it was copied from an original. It is identical in all respects with Nos. 1 and 2, but Manning unfortunately gives no details which would help to trace the original chapbook.

* Bodleian MSS Top Oxon d.199, ff. 347 - 352.



Fig.2. Illustration from title page of No.11. See p.20.

GROUP B

PEARCE'S SHEFFIELD VERSION

Apart from their publication date, the Alexander versions are not particularly unusual, but Pearce's text is so much of an oddity that it has been placed in a group of its own. Although described as 'A New Edition', it has proved impossible to trace an earlier one. The firm was in existence only between 1837 and 1845, and the chapbook cover bears a handwritten note 'Done in 1840', so that it is reasonably certain that it is a later example than those of Group A. Its title, *The Mummings' Act; or, Morris Dancers' Annual Play of St. George for the Amusement of Youth on Christmas Holidays*, is a sign of ignorance of the true character of the ceremony and its degradation to a child's plaything at Christmas, but it is more apposite than any other in using the word 'Act'. The chapbook is unusual; it has no illustrations and abandons the Act and Scene divisions in favour of 'Prologues, Songs, Recitations, &c.,' stage directions, dramatis personae and occasional Latin, as 'Enter St. George (solus)'. Whereas the other chapbooks simply attempt a dramatic form based on the traditional, this version sets out to ape the theatre using the ceremonial action as a basis. The Prologue, spoken by the Fool, and the soliloquies of two mummers at the end have no counterpart in any mummers' play elsewhere. The attempts at wit are so feeble and out of place that only the fact that they appear nowhere else in this context makes them remarkable. For example, in the 'Lecture upon Lectures' the performer says:

'..... the word orattor means jawing; because why? why because no man can speak without his jaws. Now you think I can give you a latin divination of that word, why what's English for oss? Why bone to be sure: and the jaws being full of bones is fixed proof that the word orattor comes from oss
.....'

This is far removed from the topsy-turvy humour of the traditional performers.

The action is otherwise unremarkable. After the Fool's Prologue, which does not introduce the other characters but merely extols his own learning, George delivers his autobiographical vaunt, and Slasher enters. They fight, Slasher is killed and George goes out. The Fool

enters, laments the death of his 'chiefest son' and calls for a doctor: together they haggle over the fee, the doctor describes his cures and finally restores Slasher. George returns, the rest leave whilst he delivers a further vaunt, provoking a challenge from the Prince of Paradise. In the ensuing fight George is again victorious. The lament which follows is delivered by the King of Egypt who describes the victim as his 'son and only heir'. As in the first three versions there is no cure, but an attempt to seek revenge, this time by calling in Hector, who fights with George. Wounded, Hector leaves, and the action ends with George having an inconclusive fight with the Fool. Then follow the two soliloquies and finally, all the performers sing a 'New Song' whose twelve four-line stanzas roughly summarise the main action.

Only the main action of this version is traditional in characters and theme; the literary embellishments show that the compiler thought them necessary for 'entertainment'. They depart from the original purpose and banish even the faint traces of ceremony which otherwise remain in the most modern actions.



Fig.3. Illustration from p.6 of No.19. Its original use was almost certainly to illustrate a *Valentine and Orson* chapbook. See p.20.

GROUP C THE PEACE EGG VERSIONS

These versions are grouped together because all were intended for performance at Easter as their titles show. 'Peace' in this context and 'Pace' (No.9) are corruptions of 'Pasche', Easter; 'Peace Egg' means Easter Egg, and the performers formerly collected eggs at the end of their performance. The texts are identical and there is still an annual performance of this version in the Rochdale, Lancashire, district, though the chapbook which set its style has long since disappeared. Their action is identical with the main part of Pearce's Sheffield version above save in two respects. First, when Hector appears in response to Egypt's summons, it is still George and he who exchange vaunts, but it is Slasher who fights and wounds him; second, the final quarrel between George and the Fool is replaced by the appearance of the traditional characters, Beelzebub and Devil Doubt.

These two characters are ubiquitous; the lines they speak are taken directly from the traditional with no literary tampering, possibly because to do so would result in unfamiliarity. They are the ceremonial characters, whose original purpose is forgotten, but they still carry, in modern times, the implements which their lines describe. Beelzebub says:

Here come I, Beelzebub,
And over my shoulder I carry a club
And in my hand a dripping pan,
And I think myself a jolly old man

whilst Devil Doubt finishes the action with:

Here come I, little Devil Doubt,
If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you all out;
Money I want and money I crave,
If you don't give me money, I'll sweep you all to the grave.

The club and dripping pan carried by the former are recognisable as symbols of the male and female principles, relics of the fertility motive inherent in the old ceremony. Devil Doubt's broom, now often

used as a threat to non-contributors, was traditionally to clear a space in which the action could take place. Although these characters became linked in the minds of performers and audience alike with demons and devils, this is not what they originally were in the Folk Play. They are relics of tradition carried over, unchanged, into the printed texts.

Surviving copies of the chapbooks in this group are probably late recensions. The firm of Looney and Pilling (No.6) was in business in Spear Street from 1855 to 1884, but was eventually acquired by Abel Heywood (No.7) at a date now forgotten. The latter firm, still in existence, was founded in 1832; their chapbook, identical in all respects with the Looney and Pilling version, must be considered 'modern' along with the Edwards and Bryning text (No.5), known to be on sale in its area until 1914.



Enter Devil Doubt.

Fig.4. Devil from p.8 of No.11. See p.19.

GROUP D CHRISTMAS VERSIONS

Despite the retention of 'Peace Egg' in all but one of the titles in this group, the actions were clearly intended for Christmas performance. Walker's No.11 version has a foot in both worlds; the title shows that it could be presented at either Christmas or Easter, all that would be required was the substitution of 'Easter' in the Fool's line:-

For remember, good sirs, this is Christmas rime.

This substitution is the only major item of difference between the texts in Groups C and D. Carr's version (No.15) makes it appear that George is replaced by the Fool in the final fight with Hector, but this is so obviously due to a series of omissions and typographical errors that it can be discounted. Wardman's version (No.17) belongs by virtue of its action to this group, but it takes its Grand Sword Dance and title from No.19 in the next group.

Group D has the bulk of surviving chapbooks, probably because they were produced at their period of greatest use. All are illustrated, usually without relevance to their texts, and there are occasional ventures into colour, doubtless with an eye to sales promotion. The group also shows the emergence of William Walker and Sons into the chapbook field. The firm is still in existence, but it suffered disastrous fires in 1878 and 1904 destroying all the records which might otherwise have supplied valuable background details concerning their printing.



Fig.5
Devil from p.8 of
No.11. See p.19.

GROUP E 'ABNORMAL' VERSIONS

The four versions of this group are quite different from any version so far discussed, but whether the difference was initiated by the performers or the publishers is not clear. There are three dramatic sequences in the four texts, deriving from a common source as will be seen. The two *New Mummers* (Nos.18 and 19) follow the same pattern. A jester enters followed by the four knights and all sing a wassail song:

May luck attend the Milk Pail,
May Ewes yield two and three,
May each blow of the Thrashing flail
Produce good Firmity

St George introduces himself, followed by Saints Patrick, Andrew and David, each speaking in the 'dialect' supposedly typical of the country he represents. They all move round in a circle behind the jester. Saladin enters, fights and defeats all the Saints except George who conquers him. The performance ends with the 'Grand Sword Dance'. In the *Four Champions* (No.20), the jester introduces the performers and all the knights enter followed by the King of Egypt 'holding Princess Sabrina by the hand'. Egypt introduces her and George embraces her. Saints Patrick, Andrew and David introduce themselves as in the *New Mummer* above, and move round in a circle. St Denys of France enters and fights but is overcome by George, being spared when Sabrina pleads for him. America, Germany, Russia and Turkey enter, make territorial demands on England and fight the four saints who overcome them. The jester summons a Doctor, who enters, describes his cures, demands a fee and finally cures the slain countries. This performance also ends with a 'Grand Sword Dance'. Finally, the *Seven Champions* (No.21) begins with Hans Lighthead, the jester, announcing the arrival of the Seven Champions of Christendom to Guillaume, King of Germany, and his daughter, Rosalind. The champions, Saints Patrick, James, Denis, Thulis, Wanski, Pietro and George, have come to fight for the hand of Rosalind. George fights all the saints in turn save Thulis, who refuses to meet him, and George accordingly wins Rosalind's hand.

Of these texts, only the cure of the *Four Champions* makes a concession to tradition. Even the 'Grand Sword Dance' which ends three of them owes more to the social dance Sir Roger de Coverley than to the so-called sword dances of the north-east, though the circular perambulation of the characters may be a relic of clearing a space for action. Despite their abnormality, it is known that the last version at least was actually performed. The only copy known to exist is in the Manning MSS in the Bodleian Library, where a note by Manning says that it was given to him by a performer at Adel, Yorkshire, on Christmas Day, *circa* 1905. Fallow describes, with photographs, a performance of the same version taking place near Leeds *circa* 1880* and says that it ended with the Beelzebub and Devil Doubt characters who are not mentioned in the chapbook text. It is interesting that although the non-traditional version was performed, the ceremonial characters were retained.

* T.M.Fallow: 'Yorkshire Sword-Actors' in *The Antiquary*, No.65, N.S., No.186, XXXI, Elliot Stock, London, May 1895, 138-42.



Fig.6. Illustration from p.5 of No.18. The identical illustration is used on p.5 of No.19. See p.20.

GROUP F THE BELFAST CHAPBOOK

Of all the chapbooks this is the least pretentious. It contains a version basically that of many still performed in Northern Ireland. It has been neither adapted nor 'improved' and is printed as though from a copy written down by a performer. There are no stage directions, no divisions into Acts and Scenes, and no indication as to which character is speaking apart from the sense of the lines. An unnamed performer calls for room; St George enters, delivers his vaunt and is challenged by the Turkey Champion. There is a fight and one of them is killed; a doctor is summoned who demands a fee and describes his travels. Although not specifically stated, a cure can be assumed and the Doctor calls in St Patrick who quarrels with George. The last three characters are Oliver Cromwell, Beelzebub and Devil Doubt, each summoned by the one before him, and the action ends with an appeal for money.

Copies were sold in 1850 for a halfpenny, and could still be bought in 1913 for a penny, unchanged except for the correction of typographical errors and different borders round the illustrations. There was even sufficient interest in 1928 for facsimile reprints to be given away with the *Irish Book Lover* in that year. Why this chapbook alone should reproduce a traditional text is unknown, particularly when the evidence of other examples shows that their printers made them 'presentable' before setting them in type.



Fig.7. Beelzebub from No.22. See pp.20-1.

GROUP G LOST CHAPBOOKS

In addition to Wilson's Alexander version (No.3), three other examples are known to have existed. In 1846 Richardson printed the text of the 1788 Newcastle chapbook, (No.2) and added:

'The Lancashire version differs a new edition having just been published by P.Whittle, F.S.A., Friar Gate, Preston. at the reasonable charge of one penny.'*

Despite extensive enquiries it has proved impossible to trace a surviving copy, but taking place and date of publication into account, it will probably belong to Group D should it ever come to light.

The Robin Hood version (No.24) is more of a problem. The title given is taken from an advertisement on the back cover of No.11, and but for other evidence would not be considered here. Brierley, referring to his boyhood in Failsworth, Lancashire, *circa* 1835, said that the performers changed to the 'new-fangled *Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood*' when they grew tired of the 'old act' of St George.¶ James Wood, writing from Oldham,† described an action which resolved itself into attempts by various people to join Robin Hood's band of outlaws, success being achieved by their fighting and defeating him. If this text could be found it would almost certainly belong to Group E if not placed in a group of its own.

Nothing is known of the Belfast version (No.25) save that the only copy known to exist was part of the Bussell Collection of Children's Books which was sold at Sotheby's in 1945 to the National Magazine Company. The Hearst Corporation of New York bought the collection in 1947 but its present whereabouts are unknown.

* M.A.Richardson: *The Local Historian's Table Book: Legendary Division, Vol. III, M.A. Richardson, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1846, 375.*

¶ Benjamin Brierley: *Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life, I, John Heywood, Manchester, (1863), 113-4.*

† James Wood: *Communication to Manchester City News, City News Office, Manchester, 11th March 1905, 2c.*

ILLUSTRATIONS

The examples of illustrations used in this study prove by their almost complete irrelevance to the actions they were used to illustrate, that their primary purpose was to attract purchasers. Their greatest use was in the Group D versions, the earliest chapbooks had only two standard printer's ornaments. Nos.6 and 7 of Group C have only two illustrations, whilst No.5 uses none; this group is probably the latest of all. Since the chapbooks were cheap publications, the expense of cutting blocks specially would be prohibitive; it is not surprising that any block already in stock or cheaply available would be used, be it relevant or not.

J.Wrigley, publisher of the *Peace Egg* (No.8), seems to have set the style for some of the illustrations used by others who followed him. He is described as a 'block-cutter', in business between 1832 and 1850, making him one of the very early publishers of this kind of material. Although a block-cutter normally worked for textile printing, Wrigley must have been a letterpress printer also, and it seems a fair assumption that he would cut blocks for his own publications. The ones he used for his version owe more to theatrical and fictional works than to tradition, and are woodcuts of armoured knights which were also used by Johnson, Carr and Lund (Nos.10, 15 and 16). There are slight differences in the illustrations, minor ones of a different ground, different ornamentation on the armour, and the absence or presence of a moustache. Apart from this, the figures are clearly from the same design and merely show the individuality of hand-made blocks.

Even where publishers attempted to match illustration with text, the result is clear evidence that they misunderstood the material they were printing. The Fool was always a parti-coloured Punch-like figure reminiscent of the court jester, far removed from the rags, tatters, animal skins, ribbons or patches of the traditional mummers' fool. Devil Doubt and Beelzebub, illustrated in various styles, are always shown as demons, though it must be admitted that their traditional implements are usually present.

Wardman particularly chose a peculiar mixture to illustrate his version (No.17). Some of these have an eastern theme with a debt

to *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, others include a grenadier, couples dancing in a ballroom, Victorian children standing at a cross-roads, and a trumpeter outside a castle gate, the last possibly from an old *Seven Champions* chapbook.* To illustrate the *Peace Egg* (No.11), Walker chose figures which followed the style of Wrigley but one was of a girl and another of a sailor, both dancing; in the background of each a man-of-war sails away. These blocks were probably cut originally for use on broadsides dealing with nautical subjects; the dress suggests an early nineteenth century date for their production. The same version illustrates its St George lines with a kilted Scot, in defiance of his being the patron saint of England. For some reason this chapbook appears to have been the most popular of all; it is certainly the one on which the present Midgley, Yorkshire, version is based,† and it is known to have had a wide circulation in the West Riding from circa 1840 onwards, supplanting Pearce's Sheffield text completely in his area.

As a further attraction, there were ventures into colour, some elaborate, others with crude hand-painted washes of four or five colours. The surviving copies of Harkness' *Peace Egg* (No.12) show this clearly; the colours differ in the various copies and they are laid on with indifferent skill. Walker's *New Mummer* (No.18), on the other hand, is more expertly produced, and although not elaborate, its five colours are printed with care; to hold its price at a penny outdoes Catnach's 'penny plain and twopence coloured'. The use of colour only increased the irrelevance of the illustrations, but when blocks were cut specially for the publication as they were for the Belfast version, the results, though crude, are more pleasing.

The style of these Belfast blocks suggests an eighteenth century date. Being woodcuts, as indeed are all the illustrations, they show

* A chapbook, *The Life and Death of St. George, the Noble Champion of England*, Printed and Sold at the Printing-Office in Bow-Church-Yard, London, n.d. (Harvard College Library, U.S.A.), has an almost identical illustration on page 4. The chapbook is a variant of the normal prose romance of the *Seven Champions*.

† See H.W.Harwood and F.H. Marsden: *The Peace Egg, The Midgley Version*, Halifax Printing Works, Halifax, 1935.

signs of wear from excessive use. As has been seen, this chapbook had more than one printing, and the identical worn patches show that the same blocks were used for each edition. It is remarkable that the woodcuts used in all these chapbooks survived as long as they did; some can be identified as belonging to older chapbooks such as *Valentine and Orson* (see Fig.3), which had passed out of circulation before the mummers' texts began publication. Possibly because they appear to have been cut specially, the Belfast illustrations are much cruder than woodcuts used in even the older chapbooks. The many uses of the latter permit more elaboration but show a lack of originality for their purpose discussed here.



Fig.8. Knight from p.2 of No.8. See p.19.

DATING

Only four of the versions bear a printing date and other means have to be used to date the remainder. The 1856 of Roberts' *Peace Egg* (No.14) probably represents their greatest period of use. Most of the firms had disappeared by 1890, and, with some exceptions, were of the jobbing printer class. Johnson (No.10) first began business in 1813 and continued at the address given on the chapbook until 1851 when his son took over, moved, and expanded the business. Buchan (No.13), with a variety of strings to his bow, had his works at various numbers in St Peter's Street, Leeds, between 1875 and 1897, though it is doubtful if he actually moved premises since a change in address numbers was often caused by extensive building. Wardman (No.17) was a 'letterpress printer and printing ink manufacturer' in Bradford in 1830. In 1845 he was also a worsted spinner, perhaps a connection with fabric trades as with Wrigley (No.8) in Manchester, but by 1863 the firm had disappeared. Lund (No.16) was a 'Bookseller, binder and printer' between 1847 and 1868; in Manchester, Carr (No.15) only traded from the Hanover Street address between 1840 and 1848.

Slightly more is known about Harkness of Preston (No.12), who began printing broadsides in about 1838 and continued to do so until approximately 1885. J.H.Spencer in the *Preston Herald* of January 2nd, 1948 described his work as being well printed with good blocks for illustrations, though his mummings' play chapbook hardly supports this view. He never dated his work, but serially numbered his broadsides as they appeared and had reached 1200 when he died. In addition to his own publications, he also printed them for the trade generally, and where he did so, left them unnumbered. His chapbook may have been one of these latter publications, and more copies might have survived save for the fact that after his death his existing stocks were taken to Blackburn and sold for waste paper. The word 'Annual' on his cover is set in Pica 2-line Open Sans Serif No.2, which did not appear in the type specimen books until 1844, so that it could not have been one of his early publications. One is left with the impression that these firms were small family concerns whose owners were likely to be in touch with the requirements of their customers

so that when a demand arose, they were willing to meet it.

The Group D versions belong therefore to the period from approximately 1850 onward, the Group E examples being probably much later in the century. Of the four publishers listed in the *Four Champions* (No.20), C.H.Johnson, grandson of the Joseph Johnson who printed No.10, was in business between 1875 and 1912, John Heywood added 'Ridgefield' to his two existing addresses in 1879, and W.H.Smith Ltd left New Brown Street in 1884. Although no trace has been found of the London firm, it is possible to tell from these dates that the chapbook could only have been published between 1879 and 1884. On Fallow's evidence (see page 16), the *Seven Champions* was in existence circa 1880, whilst 'Pagan' on Walker's *New Mummung Book* (No.20) is set in Tuscan, a typeface which only became available in 1878. Again, the typeface used on the cover of No.18 is also dated from approximately 1885, so that there is a solid weight of evidence for dating this group towards the end of the nineteenth century. They probably came into use then in response to a desire for something 'new'; when tradition died it was replaced by a more coherent dramatic form. Nevertheless, it is clear that the printing, if not the use of these chapbooks, covered a span of some 150 years, with a peak period of use about the middle of the nineteenth century.



Fig.9
Illustration from
p.7 of No.17.
This was almost
certainly cut for
an *Ali Baba* story.
See pp.19-20.

PROVENANCE

With the exception of those in Groups A and F, the chapbooks belong to south Lancashire and the western West Riding, the area to which industrialisation came early. Even the exceptions were printed in cities, and it must be assumed that the printed versions were a product of urbanisation. They were unknown outside the industrial area; the reason must be conjectural. The whole country was a potential market if the distribution of the ceremony as a whole can be taken as a guide.* A publisher in Swindon, Wiltshire, said that *circa* 1835,

'just before winter set in, there would be no end of applications for 'Mummers' Books'. But these we could never supply, for the simple reason that they were not in existence ...'

In the light of our present knowledge this statement was obviously inaccurate; about this period the chapbooks were certainly in use in the north-west, and although the printed copies never seem to have strayed beyond this area, the texts they contain can often be found in use elsewhere in the country. Staffordshire, Derbyshire and north Cheshire texts depend heavily on the chapbooks. A version from Syresham, Northamptonshire,† is clearly chapbook in origin up to the point where the extraneous characters are introduced. At Stone, Staffordshire,§ the text is almost word for word that of Walker's *Peace Egg* (No. 11), although the performers insisted that they had never seen the text in print. A number of versions contain fragments of the chapbook texts and it is possible that individual copies of the chapbooks travelled more widely than is now known, even if they

* See distribution maps in E.C.Cawte, Alex Helm and N.Peacock: *English Ritual Drama*, The Folk-Lore Society, London, 1967, 32, 34.

¶ William Morris: *Swindon Fifty Years Ago (more or less)*, Advertiser's Office, Swindon, 1885, 141.

† Ordish Collection, The Folklore Society, University College London, Gower Street, London, W.C.1.

§ W.Wells Bladen: 'Notes on the Folk-Lore of North Staffordshire, chiefly collected at Stone' in *The Annual Report and Transactions of the North Staffordshire Field Club*, XXXV, The Society, Stafford, 1900-1, 167-174.

were not sold in bulk to local shopkeepers. The enquiries of Professor Roger Abrahams in the Carribean Islands have brought to light at least one text which contains recognisable fragments of dialogue from the Groups D and E texts.* The *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch* in 1866 spoke of mummers going from house to house 'where they enacted a mock play, entitled *Alexander and the King of Egypt*, or recited humorous poems'. This title is exactly that of the Group A versions, but no record of chapbooks has survived either in the Carribean or Philadelphia. F.J.Snell, referring to the early nineteenth century, said that

'It has been our good fortune to obtain temporary possession of a MS copy of an old Tiverton play, the subject being *Alexander and the King of Egypt*'§

and gave a text identical with those of Group A save for the omission of the four offending lines. Of all those listed, the Group A versions are most likely to have been peddled by the itinerant chapmen, and copies sold in Tiverton in Devon. Textual evidence of versions found across the Atlantic suggests that they owed much to West Country and Irish influence. The Philadelphia mummers may have used such a copy carried by a West Country seaman, for a printed chapbook is an easy means of transmitting a version. It is significant that most ceremonies which depended on the chapbook texts were those where the local tradition had failed or was failing. It is also a tendency of 'education' to prefer the written to the spoken word. This might cause a deliberate rejection of oral tradition in favour of the printed version.

Perhaps we are apt to forget that the use of a printed text calls for a degree of literacy which is often thought to have been uncommon in the early nineteenth century; indeed, even in this century, texts written out by traditional performers often bear clear evidence

* Roger D. Abrahams: 'Pull out your Purse and Pay: A St George Mumming from the British West Indies' in *Folklore*, 79, The Folklore Society, London, Autumn 1968, 185-192.

§ F.J. Snell: *Early Associations of Archbishop Temple*, Hutchinson, London, 1904, 213-8.

that reading and writing were unfamiliar pursuits. One must therefore, assume that in the north-west there was not only a demand but also that it existed amongst people who could use the printed texts. Involvement in industrialisation may have been the driving force behind a demand for education, and one must remember that the play chapbooks came into use at a time when the older chapbooks were being killed quickly by more attractive, cheap publications printed by a new type of printer/publisher. New ventures such as *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, *The Penny Magazine for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, weekly serialisations of novels, and the growth of libraries of Mechanics' Institutes were attracting the interest of the working class, and not only fostered the demand for education but were its result. Despite this, the play chapbooks managed to survive and hold their own amongst the people of the north-west of England.



Enter St. George.

Fig.10. St George from No.11. See p.20.

SOURCE OF THE TEXTS

It has been fashionable to suppose that the origin of all mummers' texts was to be found in the George and Dragon legend as told by Richard Johnson in *The Famous History of the Seavern Champions of Christendome* in 1596. The synopses of the chapbooks already given show that there was unanimity in ignoring the dragon, as there is in almost all traditional versions, but the notion persists. Based on the earlier romance of *Sir Bevis of Southampton*, the travels of Marco Polo, and the legends of Alexander, Johnson's story enjoyed a disproportionate success from its first publication and was ultimately condensed into chapbook form. It was probably to these editions that Thomas Percy was referring in 1765 when he mentioned,

'..... the old story-book of the Seven Champions of Christendome, which, though now the play-thing of children, was once in high repute.*'

Despite its appeal to a sophisticated Elizabethan society, it had become little more than a children's fairy story in its later days.

In its original form the romance was concerned with the struggles between Christianity and Islam, a theme which has no part in the mummers' action other than the 'cursed Christian' sneer already noted. Indeed, the only debt traceable is in the names of some of the characters - George, the Prince of Morocco, the King of Egypt, and, in Ireland, St Patrick, the latter more the result of national pride than a debt to Johnson. George's autobiographical vaunt in the Play summarises his early history as told in the original story:

I am St George, who from old England sprung;
My famous name throughout the world hath rung
Many bloody 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.

* Thomas Percy: *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, II, Dent. (Everyman Edition), London, 1938, 322 (First published 1765).

When a giant almost struck me dead,
 But by my valour I cut off his head.
 I've searched the world all round and round,
 But a man to equal me I never found.

Even if this precis of part of Johnson's story were omitted, it would have no visible effect on the mummers' action.

Here the resemblance with the chapbook versions ends other than in the abnormal Group E texts, where a confused debt is owed to Johnson, or more probably to chapbooks which derived from his romance. The *Seven Champions* (No.21) introduces two saints, Wanski and Thulis, who are not in the original seven, but its story is a mixture of the adventures of St Andrew and a tournament in Greece where the champions finally overcome Pagan opposition. A further debt may be owed elsewhere. In 1638 John Kirke turned Johnson's original story into a five-act play in blank verse,* and in doing so had to introduce features to make it conform to the demands of the stage. It may be from this source that the 'Grand Sword Dance' comes, for Kirke ended his drama with a dance by all the champions. The play was later sent about the country as a puppet-play and though unfortunately no adapted text is known to exist,† it must have introduced the dramatic form to a wider audience. In more recent times the original story was used as a subject for Toy Theatres as illustrations in the Constance Meade Memorial Collection of the Oxford University Press prove, so that its appeal lasted for some three hundred years, providing a ready-made, but inaccurate, explanation of the Mummers' Act.

The debt to Johnson is extremely small therefore, and the source of all but the Group E texts must be elsewhere. Nicholson's Belfast version (No.22) may supply a clue to their ultimate origin, for, as said

* John Kirke: *The Seven Champions of Christendome, Acted at the Cocke-pit and at the Red Bull in St Johns streete, with a generall liking. And never printed till this yeare 1638. Written by J.K. London: Printed by J.Okes, and are to be sold by James Becket at his shop in the Inner Temple Gate, 1638.*

† Margaret Dean-Smith: 'The Life-Cycle or Folk Play' in *Folk-Lore*, 69, Glaiser, London, 1958, 249, quoting information from Mr George Speaight.

on page 17, this version is typical of many traditional ones still performed in Northern Ireland. What seems likely is that the chapbook publishers took a traditional version familiar to their area and edited and augmented it for publication. The less attractive versions like Pearce's Sheffield text (No.4) eventually disappeared in favour of the more popular. If the basis were traditional it would account for the retention of Beelzebub and Devil Doubt with their familiar lines. The texts which ultimately emerged were an 'art form' of something more home-spun, perhaps more elegant in style, but certainly lacking the spirit of the originals.

Fig.11
St George from
No.17. See pp.
19-20, 32.



THE DECAY OF A CEREMONY

The use of these mummers' chapbooks coincides with the time when poverty was endemic amongst the agricultural community; the Enclosure Acts had turned the farm labourers into landless workers, and food prices, aggravated by bad harvests, had risen because of the Napoleonic Wars. In East Anglia particularly, in addition to these agricultural problems, the woollen industry suffered a decline from roughly 1786 to 1816.* These conditions caused a drift from the land in search of work; it is possible that much of this emigrant population found a home in the north-west. Here, the newcomers would have to adopt a new way of life; old ways and habits would be impossible to maintain. Louis James remarks:

'The essentially rural lower-class culture which expressed itself in ballads, broadsheets and chapbooks, was fragmented when the worker moved into the towns.'[¶]

This fragmentation must also have affected tradition and custom, but whether the will to maintain them was weakened by new surroundings, or whether it was too much trouble to keep ceremonial alive without the stimulus supplied by the turn of the seasons is unknown. Although much longer plays were kept alive by purely oral tradition elsewhere in the country, the people of the north-west depended on printed copies for their texts.

The emphasis shifted amongst the performers themselves. This ceremony is traditionally a man's custom; in the north-west the performances passed into the keeping of the children. Brierley[†] mentions three sets of performers, the 'don' set or 'lump-yeds' who were youths of ten or twelve, who fenced 'three up and three down' with real swords, a younger set with tin scimitars who performed the 'old threadbare pace-egg rhymes', and a third set who were 'thorough juveniles', content with 'thraddle-pins for side-arms' and with besoms to sweep away all who refused to contribute eggs. He adds that on reaching the age of twelve the performers made way for the 'next

* A.J. Peacock: *Bread or Blood: the Agrarian Riots in East Anglia; 1816*, Gollancz, London, 1963.

[¶] Louis James: *Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850*, O.U.P., London, 1963.

[†] *op. cit.* See p. 18.

lower grade of the rising generation'. Brierley was referring to the early nineteenth century, but even today the performances of the area are maintained by children. For this the chapbook publishers must take the responsibility; by printing texts 'for the amusement of children', by adding illustrations which would attract them, they gave the ceremony to the children whose fathers were no longer interested. This process was hastened by the publishers; elsewhere, in the north-east of England for example, children took over the ceremony as it decayed. This was a much later development belonging to the twentieth century, not to the nineteenth as in the north-west.



Fig.12. Fool from No.8. The identical illustration is used in Nos.10 and 16. A similar block facing the opposite direction is used in No. 15, and a cruder version in No.13. See p.19.

THE END-PRODUCT

There can be no doubt that these chapbooks kept traditional observance alive, albeit changed, when it would otherwise have disappeared completely. They retained traditional elements whilst dispensing with the ceremony which had been fundamental, turning the action into something approaching dramatic coherence. Misunderstanding the nature of the material they were using, the publishers sent the new generation of performers in a different direction: for example, the illustrations they printed for attraction helped set the style for dressing in character. Fallow (see page 16) published photographs of the performers he saw *circa* 1880, and their costume was almost identical with the illustrations used by Wardman (No. 17); it is still fashionable for modern performers in the area to dress in home-made 'armour'. Whether this can be attributed to the style set by Wrigley (No.8) is debatable, but it is certainly not the style used by traditional performers elsewhere. The latter usually wore streamers of ribbons or paper over their ordinary clothes so that the performer was hidden and could not be recognised, for recognition broke the 'luck'.

The normal effect of tampering with tradition is to cause it to decline if not vanish completely: the chapbooks had the opposite effect, producing a blend of tradition and re-writing which was apparently acceptable. Although the centres of publication were relatively few, as the Check List shows, the use of the chapbooks was not confined to their immediate vicinity. From the cities they spread into adjacent villages and hamlets, until it becomes extremely rare to find any version in the area as a whole which does not ultimately derive from the chapbooks. Despite this, a few characters occur sporadically who never appear in printed texts. At Midgley, Toss-pot, a traditional character, carries a dummy known as his 'tally-wife', the local name for a woman living with a man out of wedlock. Neither appears in any chapbook, and such examples, where they occur, must be considered to be local traditional variations on the chapbook theme.

This study began by making a distinction between 'traditional' and 'chapbook' versions. In the investigation of a complicated subject of which the chapbooks are a small but vital part, this division is nec-

essary. Now it must be acknowledged that in the north-west of England the distinction cannot be rigid, for although a printed text might be unknown elsewhere, here the chapbook versions became the traditional ones and fragments of them traditional over a wider area. Although modern performers may not know of the existence of the chapbooks, nevertheless in some places the versions they follow are those determined by printers, who, a product of the times and industrial areas in which they lived, have now disappeared.



Fig.13. Trumpeter from P.14 of No.17. See p.20.

CHECK LIST OF KNOWN PLAY CHAPBOOKS

In searching for these, the emphasis was on finding different versions and not on tracing every possible copy. The locations given are therefore not exhaustive and it is certain that other copies exist in libraries or private possession. If any versions not listed, or the whereabouts of copies of the Group G versions, are known to readers, the author would be glad to be informed so that the study can be brought up to date.

GROUP A THE ALEXANDER TEXTS (1771-1826. See pp.7-9)

- 1 *Alexander and the King of Egypt: A Mock Play as it is acted by the Mummings every Christmas*, Newcastle: Printed in the Year 1771.
8 pp., 4to.
Dyce Collection, D20.N.1., Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, London.
Probably mentioned by John Brand: *Observations on Popular Antiquities: ...*, T.Saint, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1777, 185, as printed by T.Saint.
- 2 *Alexander and the King of Egypt: A Mock Play as it is acted by the Mummings every Christmas*, Newcastle: Printed in the Year 1788.
8 pp., 4to. (Text reproduced on p.40 et seq.)
Bodleian Library, Oxford, Douce PP217.
Reproduced in expurgated form by M.A.Richardson: *The Local Historian's Table Book: Legendary Division*, Vol.III, M.A.Richardson, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1846, 375-380.
Reprinted 'Verbatim, with two or three slight omissions, necessary for modern ears' by William Sandys: *Christmastide, its History, Festivities and Carols*, John Russell Smith, London, n.d., (1852, B.M. Catalogue), 292-7.
- 3 *Alexander and the King of Egypt: a Mock Play as it acted by the Mummings every Christmas*, printed by T.Wilson, King-street, Whitehaven, 1826.
No copy known to exist. Reprinted by William Hone: *The Every-Day Book*, II, Hunt and Clarke, London, 1826, Cols.1645-1648, in expurgated form.
Full typescript in Manning MSS, Bodleian Library, MS.Top.Oxon. d.199, ff.347-352.

GROUP B PEARCE'S SHEFFIELD VERSION

(circa 1840. See pp.10-11)

- 4 *The Mummers' Act; or, Morris Dancers' Annual Play of St. George, with Prologues, Songs, Recitations. &c., for the Amusement of Youth on Christmas Holidays.* New edition. London. Printed for all Booksellers, and Sold by Pearce and Son, Gibraltar-St. Sheffield. 12 pp., 8vo.
Original in private possession. Xerox prints from this in Sheffield City Museum and possession of the author.

GROUP C - THE PEACE EGG VERSIONS

(up to 1914. See pp.12-13)

- 5 *The Peace Egg, or St. George: An Easter Play,* supplied by Edwards and Bryning Ltd., Castle Works, Rochdale. (Probably late 19th century). 8 pp., 8vo.
Original in possession of the author.
- 6 *The Peace Egg, or St. George: An Easter Play,* Printed for the Booksellers by Looney and Pilling, Spear Street, Manchester. (Between 1855 and 1884). 8pp., 8vo.
Ordish Collection, Folklore Society, University College London, Gower Street, London, W.C.1.
- 7 *The Peace Egg, or St. George: An Easter Play,* Printed by Abel Heywood and Son. Oldham Street, Manchester. (Probably late 19th century). 8 pp., 8vo.
Original in possession of the author.
2nd copy: Gilchrist Collection, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, 2, Regent's Park Road, London, N.W.1.
3rd copy: Ordish Collection.

GROUP D CHRISTMAS VERSIONS (circa 1830-1890. See p.14)

- 8 *The Peace Egg.* Printed and Published by J.Wrigley, 30, Miller-street, Manchester. (Between 1832 and 1850.) 8pp., 8vo.
British Museum, Shelf No.1077 g.37, f.27.
- 9 *The Pace Egg. A Christmas Joust for Boys,* William Walker and Sons,

- London and Otley. (*Circa* 1840 onwards). 8pp., 8vo.
Ordish Collection.
- 10 *The Peace Egg*, Published by J. Johnson, Bookseller, &c., 42, Call Lane and 1, Cloth Hall Street, (Opposite the Corn Exchange), Leeds, (Between 1813 and 1851). 8 pp., 8vo.
Constance Meade Memorial Collection, University Press, Oxford.
2nd copy: Ordish Collection.
- 11 *Walker's Series of Juvenile Plays for Christmas and Eastertide: The Peace Egg*, William Walker and Sons, London and Otley, (*circa* 1840 or later). 8 pp., 8vo.
Constance Meade Memorial Collection.
2nd copy: Ordish Collection.
Facsimile reprint, n.d., but without front cover, printed for The Troubadour by John Foreman, Broadsheet King.
Douglas Kennedy: 'Observations on the Sword-Dance and Mummers' Play' in *The Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*, 2nd S., 3, O.U.P., London, 1930, 27-31, reprints a version entitled *The Pace Egg (St. George and the Dragon), Joust for (Plough) boys*, William Walker and Sons, London and Otley, which is identical with this version and which was performed at Acaster, Yorkshire. The original had MS notes on the title page and Mr Kennedy only saw a transcript. The title given may therefore, have manuscript additions, and no other original has yet been found.
The identical text as performed near Headingley, Yorkshire, was reprinted by F.W. Moorman: 'A Yorkshire Folk Play and its Analogues' in *Essays and Studies*, II, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1911, 134-157.
This version is also the basis of many performed in the West Riding of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, north Cheshire, south Lancashire, and Staffordshire.
- 12 *The Peace Egg; or, St. George's Annual Play, for the Amusement of Youth*, Printed by J. Harkness, 121, Church Street, Preston. (Between 1844 and *circa* 1885). 8 pp., 8vo.
Original in possession of the author.

- 2nd copy: Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
 3rd copy: Harris Public Library, Preston.
- 13 *The Peace Egg*, Printed and Published by G.Buchan, Printer, Wholesale Stationer, Dealer in Toys and Fancy Goods &c., Leeds. (Between 1875 and 1897). 8 pp., 8vo.
 Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
 A Xerox print forwarded by Mr Paul Smith from an original in possession of a correspondent in Leeds, is identical with the above, apart from the address being given on front and back covers as: 'Printed and Published by G.Buchan, Printer and Wholesale Stationer, 87 and 89, St. Peters' Street, Leeds.'
- 14 *The Peace Egg*, Published and Sold by J.Roberts, 4, Wood-Street. Leeds, 1856. 8 pp., 8vo.
 Leeds Reference Library, Central Library, Leeds.
- 15 *The Peace Egg or Saint George's Annual Play for the Amusement of Youth*, Printed and published by R.Carr, Hanover-Street, Manchester, (Between 1840 and 1848). 8 pp., 8vo.
 Leeds Reference Library.
- 16 *The Peace Egg*, Sold Wholesale and Retail by J.Lund, Westgate, Bradford. (Between 1847 and 1868). 8 pp., 8vo.
 Leeds Reference Library.
- 17 *The Mummer; or, The Wassail Cup. A Romance. Written expressly for all Mummings, to commemorate the Holy Wars, and the Happy Festival of Christmas*, Printed and sold by H.Wardman, Chapel-Lane, Bradford. (1830 or later, but not so late as 1863). 16 pp., 8vo.
 Leeds Reference Library.

GROUP E ABNORMAL VERSIONS*(circa 1880 to 1905. See pp.15-16)*

- 18 *Walker's New Mummer or the Wassail Cup*, William Walker and Sons, London and Otley, (1855 or later). 8 pp., 8vo.
 Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
 2nd copy: Madan Collection, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet.C17, No.2.

- 19 *Walker's New Mummers; or, the Wassail Cup. A Romance. Shewing how the Four Brave Patron Saints conquered the renowned Pagan Giant Saladin. Written expressly for all Mummers, to commemorate the Holy Wars, and the happy Festival of Christmas.* Printed by William Walker, Kirkgate, Otley. 12 pp., 8vo.
Ordish Collection.
- 20 *New Mumming Book. The Four Champions of Great Britain, showing how St. George of England; St. Patrick of Ireland; St. Andrew, of Scotland, and St. David, of Wales conquered the Representatives of all Nations.* LONDON: T.H.Roberts & Co., 52, Fleet Street, Strand. MANCHESTER: John Heywood, Ridgefield; W.H.Smith and Son, New Brown Street. LEEDS: C.H.Johnson, Publisher, Cloth Hall Street, and all Booksellers and News-Agents. (Between 1879 and 1884). 8 pp., 8vo.
Ordish Collection.
- 21 *Walker's Series of Juvenile Plays for Christmas and Eastertide: The Seven Champions of Christendom.* William Walker and Son, London and Otley. (This copy was in circulation circa 1905 but the text was in use circa 1880. It is reproduced below). 8 pp., 8vo.
Manning MSS, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Oxon. d.199, ff.333-40.

GROUP F THE BELFAST CHAPBOOK

(circa 1850 to 1913. See p.18)

- 22 *The New Christmas Rhyme-Book.* Printed for the Booksellers, by J. Nicholson, Cheapside, Church Lane, Belfast. 16 pp., 16mo.
Ordish Collection.
2nd copy: Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra Manor, Holywood, Co. Down, Ireland.
3rd copy: In possession of the author. (This copy has a different border round the illustrations on pp.14 and 15 from the other two).
Reprinted with minor corrections of text by R.J.E.Tiddy: *The Mummers' Play*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1923, 141-3.
Reprinted verbatim by Alan Gailey: *Christmas Rhymers and Mum-*

mers in Ireland, The Guizer Press, Istock, 1968, 40-3.

GROUP G LOST CHAPBOOKS (See p.18)

- 23 Version published by Peter Whittle, Preston, circa 1846, title unknown.
- 24 *Walker's Juvenile Plays for Christmas and Easter: Robin Hood, Little John, and his Merry Men*, William Walker and Sons, Otley. (About the same date as No.11).
- 25 *The Christmas Rime, or, The Mummings' Own Book*, J.Smith, Belfast, circa 1806. Copy in the Bussell Collection of Children's Books, present whereabouts unknown.

ADDITIONAL VERSION

Since the above Check List was printed, the enquiries of Dr Cawte have produced an additional version. Its details are as follows:

Alexander and the King of Egypt. A Mock Play as it is acted by the Mummings every Christmas, Callander and Dixon, Printers, 3, Market Place, Whitehaven, n.d. 8 pp., 8vo.

Hutchinson Collection, Whitehaven Public Library, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumberland.

A second copy, with an identical text, but with type re-set, is in Carlisle Public Library, Tullie House, Jackson Collection, Shelf No. J169.

This version takes the Group A texts as its basis, but has the four 'coarse' lines bowdlerised and other genteel amendments made elsewhere. After 'The Conclusion', Beelzebub appears with a 20-line mixture of the Big Head and Beelzebub dialogue interspersed with nonsense lines.

The printing firm is still in existence. Its present owner, Mr. S.Robertson, said that the firm did no printing until his father started in the 1890's, and that the latest date of printing was 1909. The Carlisle copy was aquired in 1891 and does not have the typographical error on p.4. of the Whitehaven version (*K. of Kgypt*). The typeface is the same in both copies and it is impossible to be certain which was the first printing.

TEXTS

The texts below are reproduced exactly from the chapbooks concerned. The 1788 text is identical with the 1771 version apart from the words marked with an asterisk. The 1771 variants are given by the side. An oblique stroke followed by a number indicates the end of the page in the original chapbook.

The versions have been selected for reproduction here because they are normally difficult to see and because they illustrate the extremes of the printed texts. *The Seven Champions* is so far removed from what is normally considered traditional that only the fact that two independent accounts say that it was actually performed justifies its inclusion as a mummers' play. Whereas the first text has many lines familiar today, the second has none. The costume details given clearly demonstrate its further departure from tradition and may have influenced the dressing in character still prevalent in the area.

The action of *Alexander and the King of Egypt* follows that of most mummers' texts in broad outline, but the *Seven Champions* departs from it entirely. The two hundred years which separate their printing may be responsible for this since the Group E versions, all of approximately the same period, have this divergence in common. It may be that this typifies the desire for change which Brierley noted in the Manchester area circa 1800. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that the *Seven Champions* was actually performed, clear evidence that the ceremony had gone, the original purpose had been long forgotten, and the performers were solely interested in collecting contributions by 'improving' their performance.

ALEXANDER,
AND THE
KING OF EGYPT.

A

MOCK PLAY,

As it is Acted by

The MUMMERS every CHRISTMAS.

NEWCASTLE: Printed in the Year 1788. /Title page

A

MOCK PLAY

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter ALEXANDER.

Alexander speaks.

SILENCE, Brave Gentlemen; if you will give an Eye
Alexander is my Name, I'll sing the Tragedy;

A Ramble here I took, the Country for to see,

Three Actors here I've brought so far from Italy;
 The first I do present, he is a noble King,
 He's just come from the Wars, good Tidings he doth bring.
 The next that doth come in, he is a Docter* good, *Doctor
 Had it not been for him, I'd surely lost my Blood.
 Old Dives is the next, a Miser, you may see,
 Who, by lending of his Gold, is come to Poverty,
 So, Gentlemen, you see four Actors will go round,
 Srand off a little While, more Pastime shall be found.

Exeunt /3

Act I. Scene II.

Enter Actors.

ROOM, Room, brave Gallants, give us Room to Sport,
 For in this Room we have a mind to resort,
 Resort, and to repeat to you our merry Rhyme,
 For remember, good Sirs, this is *Christmas* Time;
 The Time to cut up Goose Pies now doth appear,
 So we are come to act our merry Mirth here:
 At the sounding of the Trumpet, and beating of the Drum,
 Make room, brave Gentlemen, and let our Actors come.
 We are the merry Actors that traverses the Street;
 We are the merry Actors that fight for our Meat;
 We are the the merry Actors that shew the pleasant Play,
 Step in, thou King of Egypt, and clear the Way,
 King of Egypt. I am the King of Egypt, as plainly doth appear*
 And Prince George he is my only Son and Heir: *appear,
 Step in therefore, my Son, and act thy part with me,
 And shew forth thy Praise before the Company.
 Prince George. I am Prince George, a Champion brave and bold*
 For with my Spear I've won three Crowns of Gold; *bold,
 'Twas I that brought the Dragon to the Slaughter,
 And I that gain'd the Egyptian Monarch's Daughter,
 In Egypt's Fields I Prisoner long was kept,
 But by my Valour I from them soon 'scaped:
 I sounded at the Gates of a Divine,

And out came a Giant of no good Design,
 He gave me a blow, which almost struck me dead,
 But I up with my Sword and did cut off his Head.
Alexander. Hold, *Slacker*, (*sic*) hold, pray do not be so hot,
 For on this Spot thou knowest not who thou's got;
 'Tis I that's to hash thee and smash thee, as small as Flies,
 And send thee to *Satan* to make minch Pies:
 Minch Pies hot, minch Pies cold,
 I'll send thee to *Satan* e'er thou be three Days old.
 But hold, *Prince George*, before thou go away,
 Either thou or I must die this bloody Day;
 Some mortal Wounds thou shalt receive by me,
 So let us fight it out most manfully.

/4
Exeunt

ACT II. SCENE I.

Alexander and Prince George fight, the latter is wounded and falls.

King of Egypt speaks.

Curs'd Christian, what is this thou hast done?

Thou hast ruin'd me by killing my best Son.

Alex. He gave me a Challenge, why should I him deny,

How high he was but see how low he lies.

K. of Egypt. O *Sambo! Sambo!* help me now,

For I never was in more Need;

For thou to stand with Sword in hand,

And to fight at my Command.

Doct. Yes, my Liege, I will thee obey,

And by my Sword I hope to win the Day;

Yonder stands he who has kill'd my Master's Son,

I'll try if he be sprung from Royal Blood,

And through his Body make an Ocean Flood.

Gentleman,* you see my Sword Point is broke,

*Gentlemen

Or else I'd run it down that Villain's Throat.

K. of Egypt. Is there never a Doctor to be found,

That can cure my Son of his deadly Wound.

Doct. Yes, there is a Doctor to be found,

That can cure your Son of his deadly wound.
K. of Egypt. What Diseases can he cure?
Doct All Diseases both within and without,
 Especially the Itch, Pox, Palsy, and the Gout:
 Come In you ugly, nasty, dirty Whore,
 Whose age is threescore Years or more,
 Whose Nose and Face stands all awry,
 I'll make her very fitting to pass by.
 I'll give a Coward a Heart, if he be willing,
 Will make him stand without Fear of killing;
 And any Man that's got a scolding Spouse,
 That wearies him with living in his House;
 I'll ease him of his Complaint, and make her civil,
 Or else will send her headlong to the Devil.
 Ribs, Legs, or arms, when any's broke, I'm sure
 I presently of them will make a Cure;
 Nay, more than this by far, I will maintain,
 If you should break your Neck, I'll cur't again.
 So here's a Doctor rare, who travels much at Home,
 Here take my Pills, I cure all Ills, past, present, and to come.
 I in my Time have many Thousands directed,
 And likewise have as many more dissected,
 To cure the Love-sick Maid, like me there's none,
 For with two of my Pills the Job I've done;
 I take her Home, and rubs her o'er and o'er,
 Then if she dies ne'er believe me more.
 To cure your Son, good Sir, I do fear not,
 With this small Bottle, which by me I've got;
 The Balsam is the best which it contains,
 Rise up, my good Prince George, and fight again.

Exeunt.

/6

ACT II. SCENE II.

*Prince George arises.**Prince George speaks.*

O Horrible! terrible! the like was never seen,
 A man drove out of seven Senses into fifteen;
 And out of fifteen into fourscore,

O horrible! terrible! the like was ne'er before.

Alex. Thou silly Ass that lives by Grass, dost thou abuse a Stranger
 I live in hopes* to buy new Ropes, and tie thy Nose to the Manger.

Pr. Geo. Sir unto you I bend. *Hopes.

Alex. Stand off, thou Slave, I think thee not my Friend.

Pr. Geo. A Slave, Sir! that is for me by far too base a Name,
 That Word deserves to stab thy Honour's Fame.

Alex. To be stab'd, Sir, is the least of all my Care.

Appoint your Time and Place, I'll meet you there.

Pr. Geo. I'll cross the Water at the Hour of Five.

Alex. I'll meet you there, Sir, if I be alive.

Pr. Geo. But stop, Sir - I'd wish you to a Wife, both lusty and young,
 She can talk both *Dutch*, *French*, and the *Italian*, Tongue.

Alex. I'll have none such.

Pr. Geo. Why, don't you love your Learning?

Alex. Yes, I love my Learning as I do my Life,

I love a learned Scholar, but not a learned Wife,

Stand off, had I as many Hussians, Shusians, Chairs and Stools,

As you have had Sweet-hearts, Boys, Girls, and Fools;

I love a Woman, and a Woman loves me,

And when I want a Fool I'll send for thee. [7

K. of Egypt. Sir, to express thy Beauty, I am not able,

For thy Face shines like the very Kitchen Table;

Thy Teeth are no whiter than the Charcoal,

And thy Breath stinks like the Devil's A-se H-le.

Alex. Stand off, thou dirty Dog, for by my Sword thou's die.

I'll make thy Body full of Holes, and cause thy Buttons flie.

Exeunt.

ACT III. SCENE I.

*King of Egypt fights and is killed.**Enter Prince George.*

OH! what is here? Oh! what is to be done?
 Our King is slain, the Crown is likewise gone:
 Take up the Body, bear it hence away,
 For in this Place no longer shall it stay.

The CONCLUSION.

Bouncer Buckler, Velvet's dear,
 And *Christmas* comes but once a Year;
 Though when it comes, it brings good Cheer,
 But farewell *Christmas* once a Year.

Farewel, farewel, adieu! Friendship and Unity.
 I hope we have made Sport, and pleas'd the Company;
 But, Gentlemen,* you see we're but young actors four, *Gentleman
 We've done the best we can, and the best can do no more.

FINIS.

/8



Fig.14. St George from p.2 of No.12. See p.20.

TEXTS

Chapbook No.21

WALKER'S
 SERIES OF
 JUVENILE PLAYS
 FOR
 CHRISTMAS
 AND
 EASTER
 TIDE
 THE
 SEVEN CHAMPIONS
 OF CHRISTENDOM
 LONDON & OTLEY
 WILLIAM WALKER & SONS

/Front Cover

THE
 SEVEN CHAMPIONS
 OF
 CHRISTENDOM:
 A JUVENILE PLAY FOR CHRISTMAS OR
 EASTER-TIDE.

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED WITH THEIR APPROPRIATE
 DRESSES:

ST. GEORGE OF ENGLAND; Scale Armour and Sword.

ST. PATRICK OF IRELAND; Green Tunic, with Red Cross on Breast.

ST. JAMES OF SCOTLAND; Highland Dress, Tartan, &c.

ST. DENIS OF FRANCE; Tunic of Fleur-de-lis pattern.

ST. THULIS OF DENMARK; Red Mantle, Purple Dress, and Helmet.

ST. WANSKI OF RUSSIA; Grey Dress, Visor, &c.

ST. PIETRO OF ITALY; Blue Mantle edged with White.

GUILLAUME, KING OF GERMANY; Red Double Tippet edged with
 Ermine, Crown of Gold, Sceptre, &c.

ROSALIND, THE KING'S DAUGHTER; Dress of Pure White.

HANS LIGHTHEAD, THE KING'S JESTER; Fool's Dress of Motley
 Colours.

* * All have Swords and Bucklers, except, of course, the three last
 characters.

/Title page

THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS
OF
CHRISTENDOM.

(The King of Germany and his Daughter are seated. Hans Lighthouse stands by their side.)

Hans. - My Liege, seven loyal knights without
Crave for admittance. There's no doubt
These brave warriors are so indeed;
Each rides a fiery, prancing steed.

Guillaume. - What want they, Fool? their errand state:
Though on our pleasure they must wait.
The revels which we hold to-day,
Even for visitors, cannot stay.

Rosalind. - Good father dear, pray let me see
Who these loyal knights may be.

Guillaume. - Thee, daughter! No, remain within
Until the revels shall begin;
When all the knights our land can boast,
Shall strive for thee for lance and joust.
I'll see these braves, and learn their wish.

Hans. - You play the lacquey! Pish, sire, pish!
'Tis not 'the cheese' for Royal Kings
To bother and fuss about such things.
Leave all to me; I'll eye them o'er;
Their aim I'll know you may be sure!

Guillaume. - The fool says well, - he'll see, no doubt,
What all these knights have come about.
Perhaps 'tis to join the revels here;
To fight for you, my rosy dear.

Your face doth brighten; - wait a while:
To cheer all hearts, thou need'st but smile.
The stoutest lance, the boldest knight,
Still claim thee as his well-earned right.

Hans. - Saint George of England speaks without,

And asks me if my sire's about;
 I answer 'Yes.' The other six
 Say 'On we go, then; jolly bricks!
Guillaume. - Well, let them come; we'll welcome give,
 'May George of England ever live!
 (*Enter the Seven Champions of Christendom.*)
 Good morrow, king and maiden fair!
 Great Heaven hold you free from care.
 We've heard of jousting here to-day,
 So to your court have made our way.
 I fight for England, home, and beauty,
 And always mean to do my duty.
 If this fine maid's to be the prize,
 I swear I'll win by those fair eyes.
St. Patrick. - Sure, I'm the man to lick you all,
 The big, the little, small and tall.
St. George, bedad! I'll break his scull,
 And give him *sich* a bellyfull;
 With my shillelagh cut his nose,
 Knock him down, tread on his toes.
 In short, I'll make of him mince meat;
 (You'll find him rather tough to eat.)
St. Patrick, sure, will spoil your game,
 And carry off that lovely dame!
St. James. - Oh! oh! there's boasting here to-day:
 Let me put in a word, I pray.
 I bear, good sirs, the best of names:
 You all know me! I'm great *St. James.*
 From *Scotia's* land, where brave men live.
 I come, a blow to take or give:
 I'll lay some low, or else I'm wrong,
 For *James* is daring, brave, and strong.
 That lady fair shall sure be mine,
 As my bright star o'erhead she'll shine.
 Now, then, I long to come to blows,

And at her feet to lay my foes!
St. Denis. - Parbleu! here's idle words enough,
From men who do not fear rebuff.
Now, I'm from France, St. Denis too;
I'll make some of you youngsters rue.
My trusty sword will lay you low;
Conqueror here I'll quickly show.
St. George I'll pierce with many holes,
And fire away like Captain Coles!
Come on, St. Patrick, from the land of 'taters,'
I'll grind your bones like nutmeg graters!
Then as for Scotty, all o'er snuff,
Of me he shall have quite enough;
I'll tan his hide, so nice, so well,
That it from calf-skin you won't tell.
And for the three who follow here,
I'll soon make them feel rather queer!
St. Thulis. - Hold! hold! I'm Thulis, Royal Dane,
I've oft met foes and will again;
For, ever where the Dane makes war,
The nations fly, both near and far.
Shall I then, yield the vantage ground?
Shall I a weakly Dane be found?
A norseman pale! and tremble now?
The coward's crown wear on his brow?
Not !! For now I'll firmly stand
Against the bravest in the land;
While I have breath, I'll still fight on,
Until I've beaten every one.
Lady, betide me good or ill,
For thy fair hand I'll shew my skill!
St. Wanski. - From Russia, far off land I come;
The ice-bound north has been my home:
These prating fools shall learn to know
That I'm the man to strike a blow!

My dearest friend, my trusty sword,
In all I say maintains my word;
It makes a wound with blade so keen,
That where it entered scarce is seen!

Ere you can speak it lays you low;
Come on, my foes, I'm ready now!

St. Pietro. - England, Scotland, Ireland, France,
Have boastings made about their lance.

The Royal Dane and Russian bold
Are doughty foes, so I've been told.
But with my trusty sword of steel,
My prowess they shall quickly feel.

St. Pietro fights; he does not talk,
Nor on such high-flown crutches stalk!
Now, high-born dame, by thy sweet face,

Where every beauty now I trace,
I'll try and win thee, fighting fair;
For thy dear sake all danger dare!

Guillaume. - These knights speak well, Hans! Hither, fool!

Although I know 'tis not the rule;
These gentlemen alone shall fight!

Hans. - No one else, sir? Oh, blow me tight!

Why, eighty knights are ready drest,
And waiting here to do their best.

Rosalind. - Papa, I like the notion well.

Away, Hans!

Hans. - (*Aside*) Lor! now, here's 'a sell!'

Well, well, he has a Royal will; -

To know *him's* quite beyond my skill.

(*Aloud.*) Hi! there without! no joust to-day,

The king commissions me to say;

Seven knights alone are picked to fight,

So 'cut your stick' with all your might!

Go 'maul' each other - have it out;

Find out who's the master - have no doubt.

Meet face to face within the ring,
Though not before our gracious King.

Guillaume. - Prepare, ye knights; now, one and all
Be ready! - answer to your call.

And he who's victor, by command,
Shall claim our Royal daughter's hand!

Hans. I beg to say, sir -

Guillaume. - Hist! fool, hist!

St. George. - I challenge any man to fight;

By my stout heart of arm of might,
I've always vanquished all I've fought, -

The thickest danger ever sought!

The Dragon I have stricken low,

And conquered him with one great blow!

John Bull has never cried 'I am beat;'

Nor have I yet sustained defeat.

St. Patrick. - I do accept thy challenge here;

Nor do I think I've ought to fear.

Defend thyself - be on thy guard,

The struggle will be long and hard.

(They fight some time, and St. Patrick falls wounded.)

St. George. - Now, rise, St. Patrick and succumb;

For other boasters make thou room,

Who come like thee to meet their doom.

St. James. - I come, for one, thou proud St. George;

Thy idle words thou soon shalt gorge!

I've fought with ten to one before,

Yes, and would dare to meet a score.

Shall I fear one? Not I, indeed!

Bold England's boasts I will not heed.

Though thou hast laid brave Erin low,

Much tougher mettle I shall show!

Prepare to meet me - let's begin,

And see who will the struggle win!

St. George. - Come on, thou coxcomb, lying knave.

And try thy shaking bones to save!

Such men as thee I soon run through;

My sword's then whet for more to do!

(They fight, and St. James falls.)

St. James. - What! thou triumphant! 's death,

I'll fight again, while I have breath!

Hans. - Nay, friend; I think 't were wiser still

To rest awhile; thou'st had thy fill!

Rosalind. - I like St. George, he's brave and good.

Hans. - I think he's yours, my royal bud.

Like skittles how he knocks 'em down!

He well deserveth his renown.

Guillaume. - Go on, St. George; four knights remain;

To see their prowess I am fain.

So far, thou fightest with an arm

As strong as thy good heart is warm.

My Rosa's eyes oft rest on thee;

She prays that thou may'st conqueror be!

St. George. - Most gracious King! much time to save,

And prove to you that I am brave,

With two I'll fight instead of one;

The sport has hardly yet begun!

Now, bold St. Wanski, - Piétró too,

Let swords be crossed 'tween me and you:

If I am vanquished, you must fight.

Hans. - Ha! two to one's a jolly sight!

St. Wanski. - Well; I could fight thee with one arm. -

To fight with *one* will make thee warm.

If Piétró helps me we will try

To make thee heave thy dying sigh.

St. Piétró. - Agreed! Two swords will surely slay

The braggart we see here to-day:

We'll make him eat his words, I trow.

Hans. - Stop! wait a bit; we'll see just now.

St. Pietro. - Now, then, St. George, be on thy guard,
For both will hit thee, quick and hard!

(St. George fights with both. Soon Wanski falls; and for some time, Pietro fights with St. George alone; but he also gives in.)

Hans. - Well, here's a knight who's really great;
I hope to fight him's not my fate!

St. George. - The Royal Dane alone remains,
To stain with blood these wide-spread plains:

Thy wounded comrades, silent now,
To me each bent his haughty brow.

But as thou say'st - when Danes make war,
The nations tremble near and far.

Shalt thou then yield this vantage ground?

Shalt thou a weakly Dane be found?

St. Thulis. - I will not fight thee, George the brave,
Nor seek from thee to find a grave.

I will not fight thee; but I yield
To thee this Lady and the field!

Our blood runs in the Royal veins.

On England's throne sit Royal Danes.

No! I'll not fight thee; here's my hand,
Thou champion bold of every land!

(To Guillaume.) - Great King! St. George the victor stands,
Give him your daughter and your lands.

(To St. George.) Now, brave St. George, secure thy prize;
She loves thee by her glancing eyes!

Hans. - Well, here's a go. There's no mistake

How Gregory plays at Duck and Drake!

He's master here, - he beats them all,

The big, the little, short or tall.

Guillaume. - Great George of England, I proclaim

Thy title to this little Dame.

'Gainst all the world thou hold'st thy own;

I swear it by our Royal Crown!

St. George. - I thank thee, King, and take thy gift,

For which to Heaven my eyes I lift:

My foes are beaten as you see;

And more than conquered they can't be.

Good Thulis, here's my hand for thee;

As long as life lasts, friends we'll be.

Rosalind. - Yet, just a little speech from me.

In which I think you'll all agree:

To keep our revels up to-night,

And re-enact our glorious fight,

Kind people here pray help us now,

And on these Royal Knights bestow

Good bounty, to enable them

To come and see you once again.

Hans. - To all of which 'hear, hear', I say;

Shell out, good friends, without delay!

Still more - I hope your hearts incline

To bring forth cheer, both good and prime.

Your money, too, howe'er so small,

We won't object to - not at all.

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