Reading Chapbooks Closely: Gleaning Evidence about their Composition, History, and Relationship to Oral Traditions

Michael J. Preston

It has long been known that humans learn scripts (or whatever term one might prefer) for understanding the world about them. This applies to ordering a meal in a restaurant or understanding a joke as much as to reading a book. My concern here is to read chapbooks related to traditional drama closely in the contexts within which they were printed and to consider various scripts for doing so.

As some of you know, I spent twenty-five years using computers to carry out what I called “crunching texts.” Others might have more euphemistic or specific terms for this kind of activity, such as studying the influence of one text on another, or computing literary stylistics, or whatever. In the process of that work, I learned much about the characteristics of various languages in their various states, about generic differences among texts, and about the nature of the technology, and I also learned much about people's attitudes toward the texts they studied.

At that time I read text- and language-theory heavily, always looking for ways in which to describe the phenomena I encountered daily. I flirted with the theory of oral formulaic composition, and mostly discarded it. I found Chompsky's idea of transformational-generative grammar of interest, but of little use. I became quite intrigued with J.R.R.Firth's work with verbal collocations. The catalogue of such approaches is long and does not need to be enumerated here. In short, I came to use ideas when they were useful, but otherwise set them aside. I am to this day eclectic in my approaches, as I will be here.

I mentioned that I also learned much about people's attitudes toward the texts they studied. This also applies to their adherence to particular theoretical approaches. Many would assume that a particular theory was unquestionably correct and impose it at any cost on the texts they studied, almost with religious fervor; relatively few would, as I phrased it, “get their hands dirty” in working with their texts. Instead, they hired students to keyboard their texts or sought to use optical scanners, as most continue to do today. There's a distancing from one's texts there that I find amusingly disconcerting.

One learns various scripts in studying folklore, and not knowing - or not applying - the relevant script may often be seen as a basic cause for confusion. The history of the study of the traditional drama of Britain seems to me to be filled with examples of individuals following various and sometimes conflicting scripts, whether that of a concern with determining the origin of the tradition as a whole or of thinking about mumming performances as plays in the sense of what is performed at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Here I will look at examples of the three major families of chapbooks which have long been considered a part of the study of traditional drama - the *Christmas Rhyme* book, *Alexander and the King of Egypt*, and *The Peace Egg* - and argue that each contains evidence that is frequently misread (or ignored) concerning their composition, concerning their reflecting contemporary oral traditions, and concerning the various regional traditions that are signified by the term "traditional drama." I believe in "getting my hands dirty" with the texts I study, and you will hear me flit from one possible model for understanding to another. I rather like the concept of "fuzzy logic," - that sometimes a thing may belong to one set or another, depending upon circumstances. In the instance of traditional drama, that means whether a performance is more a play, more a house-visit, or perhaps something else.

Here allow me to apologize for the many transparencies that are to follow. Clearly, we will not be able to consider each at length, but this is the best way I know to avoid discussing texts that not everyone has seen, or has not seen lately. Besides, I will frequently be more concerned with the visual aspect of printed pages than with their verbal content.

I begin with pages from *The Peace Egg Book*, printed by Robert Carr - in Manchester. Examples 1-2 represent an Irish text, but with some distinctly Mancunian woodcuts. Eddie Cass, Paul Smith, and I discuss this chapbook in an essay forthcoming in *Folklore*. Here I want to highlight something we discuss in our essay - the use of woodcuts in place of the speaker-identifications that are conventional in dramatic texts. This is also a characteristic of the Belfast chapbooks (Examples 3-4), something Smith and I mentioned in passing in the Christmas Rhyme monograph. Although woodcuts do not work well, and are not used, when there is a rapid exchange between characters, the practice is sufficiently patterned in these chapbooks to be noteworthy. That suggests to me that we should rethink some of the condescending assertions about chapbook and broadside printers that are of long standing. Certainly, some printers were inept, and, certainly, many had limited materials with which to work, but let's not let our reading of such texts be controlled by the scripts that others have provided us.

That these printers did not use conventional speaker-identification suggests at least three lines of thought:

1. that they did not know how dramatic texts were supposed to be typeset;
2. that they did not consider traditional plays to be "plays" in the sense of drama;
3. or that they were replicating chapbooks that it seemed worth their while to copy.

I'm not going to argue for any of these, but rather leave them as questions posed. Instead, I'm going to suggest that the Irish chapbooks may ultimately be based on an oral text even though I do not think that will ever be documented. The formal differences between the Irish chapbooks and those printed in England are noteworthy. Peter Millington's pointing to a possible connection between the Irish oral tradition and that of the Cotswolds may be relevant here because it suggests that the Northern English tradition of chapbook texts is "something else."

I want us to look briefly at the pages containing representations of Beelzebub and Little Devil Doubt and their speeches. (Examples 2 & 4) It has long been my contention that such "supernumeraries" have too often been ignored. If one focuses on the fight and the cure, then they are superfluous. Here's where I think what I call "the narrative assumption" behind much folklore study may be tripping us up. Such characters are not generally involved in the plot or story, but they certainly are a part of these chapbooks. I

see no need to have these things we call "traditional dramas" be coherent in the sense of narrative.

Next I want us to consider briefly a map I made almost thirty years ago (Example 5) which shows the distribution of the "Big Head" speech: "Here comes I as ain't been yet," etc. The speech does not occur in even half of the 150 texts studied then, but it occurs quite often, and in what I consider to be suggestive distributions. I can posit that there may be two different distributions involved which represent different traditions, northern and southern. Of course, this flies in the face of conventional wisdom about the distribution of texts.

Let us turn quickly to page 7 of the Callender & Dixon *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook (Example 6). The text on the page ends as does the earlier chapbooks printed by White and Saint, but when we turn to page 8 (Example 7), we find a textual add-on. Spoken by Beelzebub, the speech contains, first, a "big head" quatrain, in lines 15-18 a Beelzebub speech, and finally two lines from Little Devil Doubt. It seems to me that the speeches in Example 7 came from somewhere, and I think a good argument can be made that they were a part of a local tradition that influenced the chapbook.

Now I turn to a rather odd chapbook printed here in Sheffield by Pearce & Son: *The Mummers' Act; or, Morris Dancers' Annual Play of St. George, with prologues, songs, recitations, etc. for the Amusement of Youth on Christmas Holidays*. (Example 8) In this we have "a new prologue" which is followed by "the action" of the play as we know it. That "action" ends neatly at the bottom of page 7 (Example 9) and is followed (Example 10) by "The Tailor's soliloquy" and other entertaining pieces.

I do not want to use the same language that E.K.Chambers did. Instead, I want to suggest a kind of textual structuralism - that various speeches have been added, deleted, or substituted. Again, an aging map (Example 11) shows the distribution of Father Christmas, almost always speaking the "prologue." (Ignore the distribution of Old Dame Jane.) Thus a clearly regional character seems to have been slotted in, in much the same fashion as was the "new prologue" of the Pearce & Son chapbook.

If we turn to White's *Alexander & the King of Egypt* (Example 12), we have a different prologue, only this one precedes the very prologue (Example 13) that was presumably replaced by Pearce & Son. Such structuralist language is supported by the act-and-scene designations in the Alexander chapbooks as well as by the formal make-up of the Pearce & Son chapbook. Also, the White chapbook ends with eight lines (Example 14), four of which are to be found in Ray's *Collection of English Proverbs* (1670). It looks to me as if there have been additions to both the front and the end of "the action."

A structuralist approach treats these chapbook texts as something other than "coherent," composites rather, and so each of the parts has its own history that may differ from that of the other parts. This is an important consideration for the kind of work that Paul Smith and I have published in our chapbook monographs. For the first two, during the histories of their printings, the texts were "coherent enough" for study as single texts, whatever their composite natures may suggest. *The Peace Egg* chapbooks, though, present a more complex textual challenge to our "scripts" for understanding.

So far, I have not discussed "the action" itself, and I do not much care whether or not one uses such terminology as "hero-combat," "death and resurrection," or "Quack Doctor episode." If we turn to the lengthy doctor-speech on page 6 of White's chapbook (Example 15), we have a composite speech, most of which has known sources. I believe

Paul Smith gave a paper here twenty years ago on this topic. “The Infallible Mountebank or Quack Doctor” (Example 16) is the text, but not the printing, quoted by Tiddy and those who have cited him since. The text is clearly a humorous parody of a mountebank's speech, and the image is suggestive.

If one prowls through historical representations of physicians, one can find this tooth-drawer (Example 17). To some this might be suggestive of John Finney in various traditional plays, but it's not “the origin” of John Finney in a simple-minded sense. One can also find images of a physician inspecting a container of urine (Example 18), representations of such bottles (Examples 19-20), and even the equipment for decocting medicines (Example 21). Regular physicians were the subject of humor for centuries because of their esoteric knowledge and the tools of their trade.

Beyond regular physicians and midwives and local healers, there were mountebanks on the Continent who do not seem to have had a significant influence in England until late in the 16th century or c. 1600-1620. Mountebanks, of course, were not regular physicians, but rather those we would today identify as sellers of “patent medicines.” (Examples 22-24) These certainly were the target of “The Infallible Mountebank.”

R.J.E.Tiddy, as we know, saw a connection between the doctor of the mumming plays and the central episode of the *Play of the Sacrament*, a play datable to c.1465, and so asserted that that was evidence that mummers' plays existed then. That assertion remains embedded in Early English drama scholarship and needs to be exorcised. More probably, the source for the doctor-episode in the *Play of the Sacrament* was the well-known tradition of mountebanks on the Continent; that would fit with the rest of the play's sources being Continental. Thus Tiddy was correct in seeing a “connection” between the Play of the Sacrament and local mummers' plays, but that “connection” was by way of mountebank performances and the comic portrayals of them which influenced traditional drama. Surviving 18th-century advertisements of physicians in London (Example 25) document an awareness of both real and stage mountebanks.

Let us return to the Quack Doctor songs and songs related to them (Examples 26-28) and then to the doctor-speech in *Alexander and the King of Egypt* (Example 29) which we saw briefly earlier. If we look at all closely at the text, we see a cut-and-paste kind of use of the songs in that speech. Lines 72-85 and 88-93 clearly come from “The Infallible Doctor,” and lines 86-87 come from “The Infallible Mountebank.” A detailed discussion would take us beyond the time-limit for this paper. Of importance, the remaining lines 70-71 and 94-97 were either composed for the chapbook or have a different source. How one understands them certainly relates to one's script for understanding. Peter Millington has identified just those lines as part of a “proto-text.” The question seems to boil down to whether or not the chapbook is a composite from printed sources or an expansion of an extant text, printed or oral. I would argue that the title-page of White's chapbook, which contains the words “acted by the mummers every Christmas,” indicates that there was an oral performance of some kind and that it contained these six lines. If so, how much of the chapbook text is its author's contribution, taken from whatever sources or of his own composition, we may never know. It certainly suggests a need for additional archival research.

I want to extend this argument by showing you two pages from the prompt manuscript for a much later performance. I do so because so much seems to me to be commonly swept under the rug by resorting to an argument based on “the vagaries of oral transmission.” Unless one has worked with “the stuff,” it's sometimes hard to imagine the extent to which printed texts, transcripts of oral versions, and corrections of

many kinds can interpenetrate. (Examples 30-32) Here we can see clearly that chapbook pages or passages can be inserted into a text and then be corrected and re-corrected, presumably based upon local knowledge. This is not identical to, but analogous to, my understanding of the "composition" of the doctor's speech in White's *Alexander and the King of Egypt* chapbook.

I end with a few words about the *Peace Egg* chapbooks from Manchester. Although work is in process, Eddie Cass points to Johnson's chapbook (Example 33) as the source for the Manchester chapbooks. This is an admittedly tentative statement. Eddie sketched out his thoughts one day in a "family tree," a sheet that I'll bet he never thought would show up here today. (Example 34) Clearly, he was attempting to represent textual relationships in much the way that the Smiths and I did in the *Alexander* monograph (Example 36). Pearson's chapbook (Example 36) is a page-for-page reprint, and Wrigley (Example 37) printed his from Pearson's plates. It is not a digression to note here that all of these printers treated Beelzebub's speech at the bottom of the page identically by not identifying the speaker. Thus all of these printers, whether they were aware or not of the various components of their texts, perpetuated the structural distinction between "the action" and the speeches of the "supernumeraries".

Finally we come to Carr's chapbook (Example 38), and the page I present may be the "smoking gun" in that, if Eddie Cass's textual genealogy is correct, this is the source of the garbling that characterizes Harkness's and others' chapbooks. What in the Johnson chapbook is line 143 appears at the top of the page, preceding line 133. Where line 143 should have been appear lines 154-155. Unfortunately, at this time I do not have a coherent explanation of how these lines got moved around. Because of the other formal aspects of the page, such as the treatment of Beelzebub's part, I am convinced that one printer was printing from another's text, and, as a result, I am convinced that any argument based on an appeal to "oral tradition" would be specious. If c. 1840 had been the era of linotype printing, it'd be relatively easy to explain such a scrambled text. It's clear to me that I need to learn more about 19th-century printing.

I'd like to conclude where my title began. I'm concerned that we must learn to "read" all the evidence that chapbooks provide because they do much more than "contain" texts. Rather, they represent texts, and they may well represent aspects of performance. Like all representations, chapbooks may represent texts and performances obliquely, requiring of their readers better reading habits. In addition, chapbooks must not be read out of context, whether the printed context or the oral context of their source texts. One of my concerns is that folklorists, with their rightful emphasis on "contextual data," may well have gone too far and forgotten how to read texts beyond the mundane sequence of words. Perhaps this talk will contribute towards complicating our understanding of how to read traditional drama texts more complexly.

Sources of Examples from Other Studies

Jones, Peter Murray. *Medieval Medicine in Illuminated Manuscripts*. The British Library: London, rev. edn., 1998.

Example 17 (p.94)

Example 18 (p.43)

Example 19 (p.45)

Example 20 (p.54)

Example 21 (p.74)

Katritzky, M. A. “Mountebanks, mummers and masqueraders in Thomas Platter's diary (1595-1600).” *English and Italian Theatre*, Vol.1: *The Renaissance Theatre: Texts, Performance, Design*, ed. Christopher Cairns. Ashgate: Aldershot, 1999, pp.12-44.

Example 24 (p.44)

Katritzky, M. A. “Was *Commedia dell'arte* Performed by Mountebanks? *Album amicorum* Illustrations and Thomas Platter's Description of 1598.” *Theatre Research International*, Vol.23, no.2, pp.104-126 + 9 plates.

Example 22 (Plate 7)

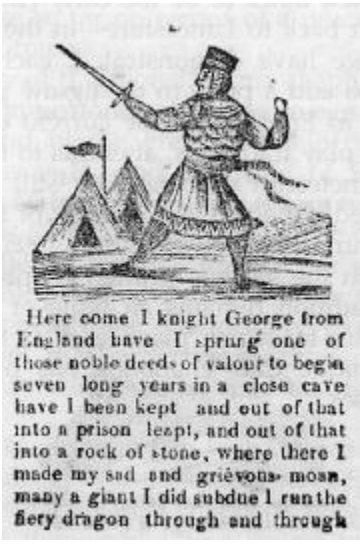
Example 23 (Plate 2)

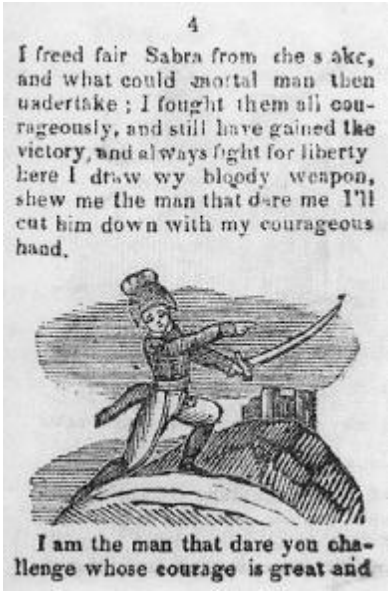
Preston, Michael J. “Solutions to Classic Problems in the Study of Oral Literature.” *Computing in the Humanities*, eds. Serge Lusignan and John S. North. University of Waterloo: Waterloo, Ontario, 1977, pp.117-132.

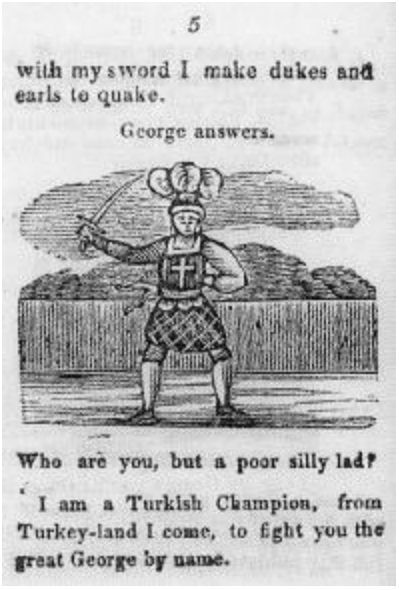
Example 5 (p.131)

Example 11 (p.132)

Example 1







R.Carr, *The Peace Egg Book*

Example 2

10

don't believe what I say, enter in devil Doubt and clear the way.

Here come I Belzebub, and over my shoulders I'carry my club, and In my hand a dripping pan, and I think myself a jolly old man.

11

and if you dont believe what I say enter in devil Doubt and clear the way.

Here come I little devil Doubt, if you do not 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.

R.Carr, *The Peace Egg Book*

Example 3

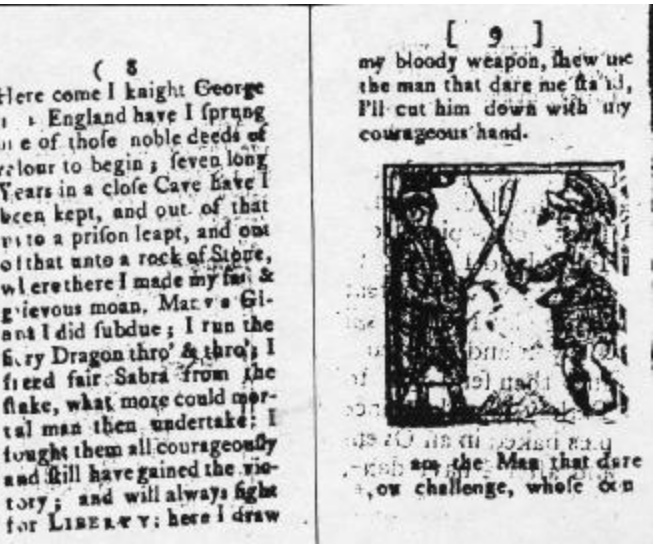
[6]

The Chriſtmas Rhime.

ROOM, roo— brave gallant boys, come give us room to Rhime, we are come to ſhow our activity in Chriſtmas Time.

[7]

Active young and active age, the like was never acted on a Stage; and if you don't believe what I ſay, enter in Prince George and clear the way.



(8

Here come I knight George [illegible] England have I ſprung [illegible] of thoſe noble deeds of valour to begin; ſeven long Years in a cloſe Cave have I been kept, and out of that into a priſon leapt, and out of that unto a rock of Stone, where there I made my ſad & grievous moan. Many a Giant I did ſubdue; I run the fiery Dragon thro' & thro'; I freed fair Sabra from the ſtake, what more could mortal man then undertake; I fought them all courageouſly and ſtill have gained the victory; and will always fight for LIBERTY: here I draw

[9]

my bloody weapon, ſhew me the man that dare me ſtand, I'll cut him down with my courageous hand.

am the Man that dare [illegible] ow challenge, whoſe [illegible]

Example 4

[18]

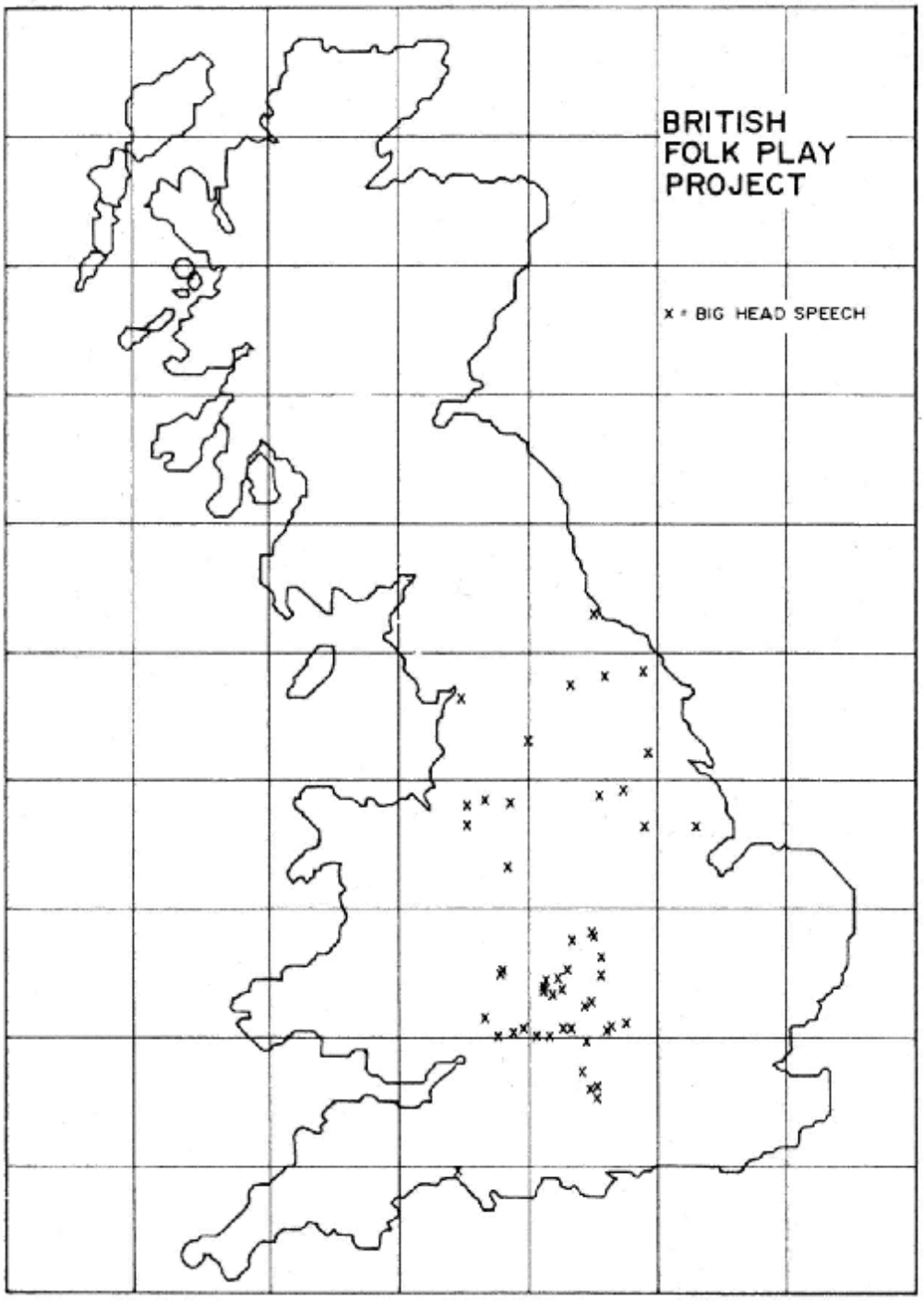
Here come I Belzebub and over my ſhoulder I carry my club and in my hand a dripping pan, & I think myſelf a jolly old man & if you don't believe what I ſay, enter in Devil-doubt & clear the way

[19]

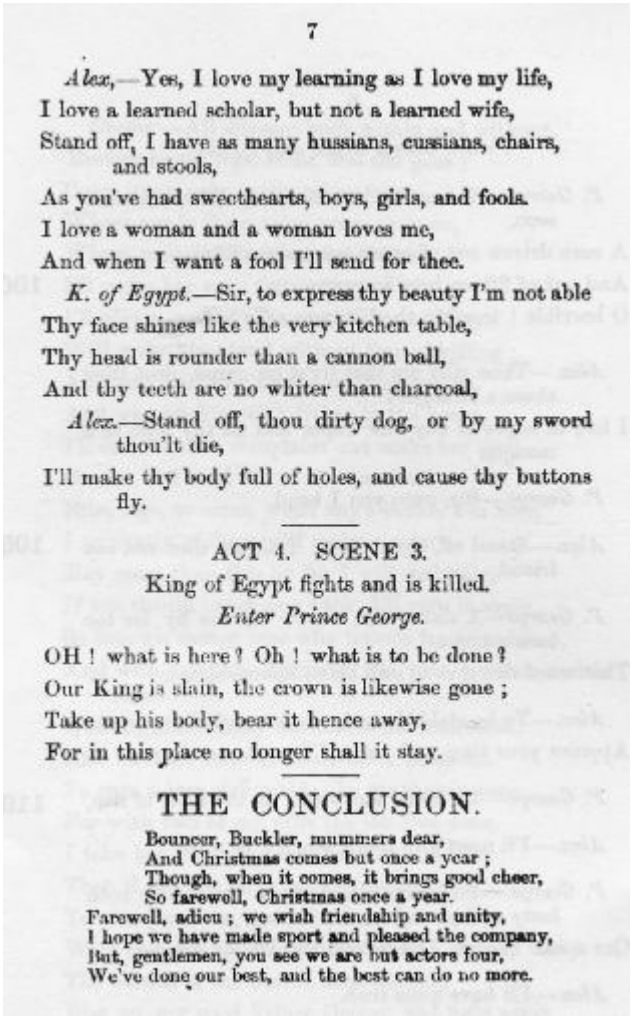
Here come I little Devil-doubt, if you don't give me money I'll ſweep you all out Money I want and Money I crave, if you don't give me Money I'll ſweep you all to the grave.

Smyth & Lyons: *Christmas Rhime*

Example 5



Example 6



7

Alex.—Yes, I love my learning as I love my life,
I love a learned scholar, but not a learned wife,
Stand off, I have as many hussians, cussians, chairs,
and stools,
As you've had sweethearts, boys, girls, and fools.
I love a woman and a woman loves me,
And when I want a fool I'll send for thee.

K. of Egypt.—Sir, to express thy beauty I'm not able
Thy face shines like the very kitchen table,
Thy head is rounder than a cannon ball,
And thy teeth are no whiter than charcoal,

Alex.—Stand off, thou dirty dog, or by my sword
thou'lt die,
I'll make thy body full of holes, and cause thy buttons
fly.

ACT 4. SCENE 3.

King of Egypt fights and is killed.

Enter Prince George.

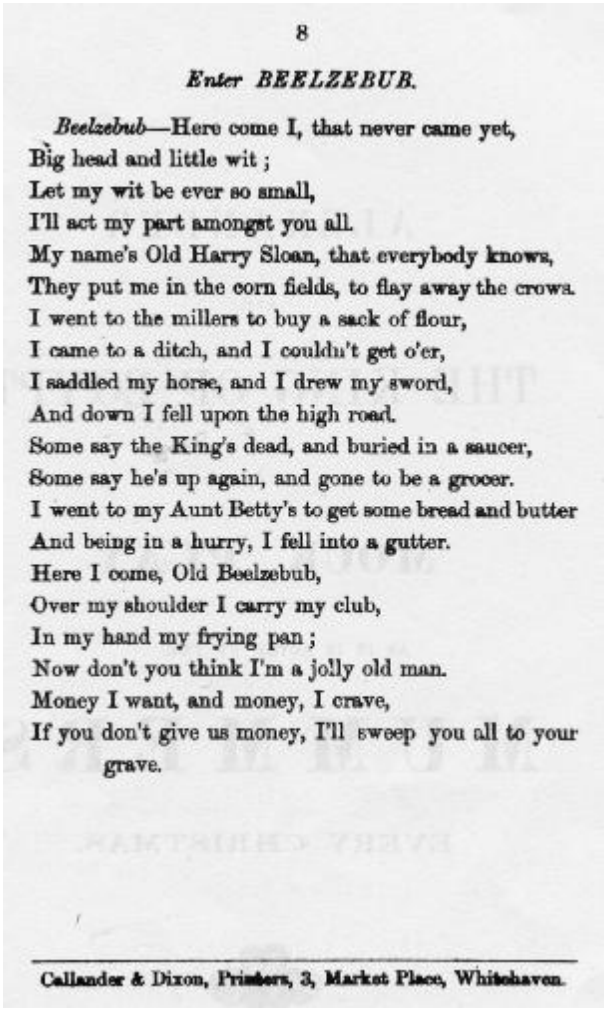
OH! what is here? Oh! what is to be done?
Our King is slain, the crown is likewise gone;
Take up his body, bear it hence away,
For in this place no longer shall it stay.

THE CONCLUSION.

Bouncer, Buckler, mummers dear,
And Christmas comes but once a year;
Though, when it comes, it brings good cheer,
So farewell, Christmas once a year.
Farewell, adieu; we wish friendship and unity,
I hope we have made sport and pleased the company,
But, gentlemen, you see we are but actors four,
We've done our best, and the best can do no more.

Callander & Dixon: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 7



8

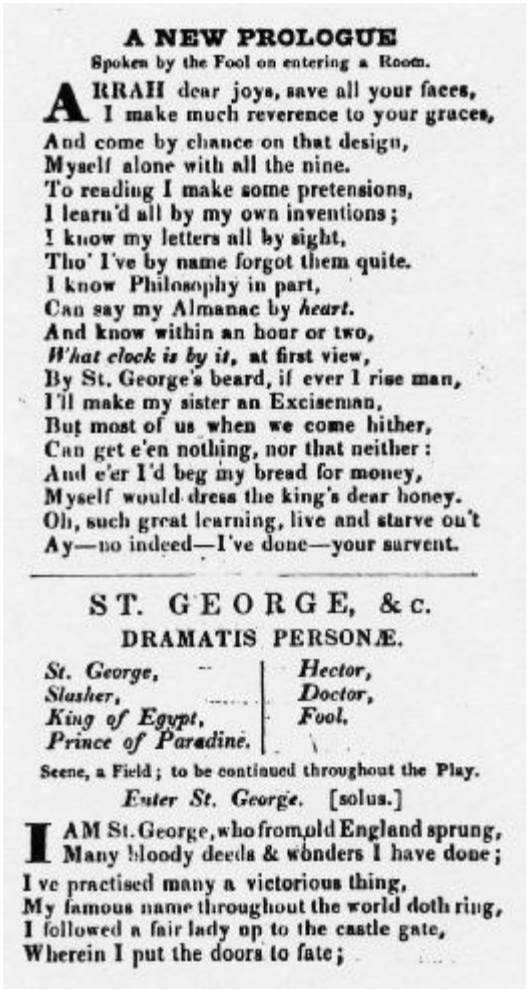
Enter BEELZEBUB.

Beelzebub—Here come I, that never came yet,
Big head and little wit ;
Let my wit be ever so small,
I'll act my part amongst you all.
My name's Old Harry Sloan, that everybody knows,
They put me in the corn fields, to flay away the crows.
I went to the millers to buy a sack of flour,
I came to a ditch, and I couldn't get o'er,
I saddled my horse, and I drew my sword,
And down I fell upon the high road.
Some say the King's dead, and buried in a saucer,
Some say he's up again, and gone to be a grocer.
I went to my Aunt Betty's to get some bread and butter
And being in a hurry, I fell into a gutter.
Here I come, Old Beelzebub,
Over my shoulder I carry my club,
In my hand my frying pan ;
Now don't you think I'm a jolly old man.
Money I want, and money, I crave,
If you don't give us money, I'll sweep you all to your grave.

Callander & Dixon, Printers, 3, Market Place, Whitehaven.

Callander & Dixon: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 8



A NEW PROLOGUE

Spoken by the Fool on entering a Room.

ARRAH dear joys, save all your faces,
I make much reverence to your graces,
And come by chance on that design,
Myself alone with all the nine.
To reading I make some pretensions,
I learn'd all by my own inventions;
I know my letters all by sight,
Tho' I've by name forgot them quite.
I know Philosophy in part,
Can say my Almanac by *heart*.
And know within an hour or two,
What clock is by it, at first view,
By St. George's beard, if ever I rise man,
I'll make my sister an Exciseman,
But most of us when we come hither,
Can get e'en nothing, nor that neither:
And e'er I'd beg my bread for money,
Myself would dress the king's dear honey.
Oh, such great learning, live and starve on't
Ay—no indeed—I've done—your servent.

ST. GEORGE, &c.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

St. George,	*Hector,*
Slasher,	*Doctor,*
King of Egypt,	*Fool.*
Prince of Paradine.	

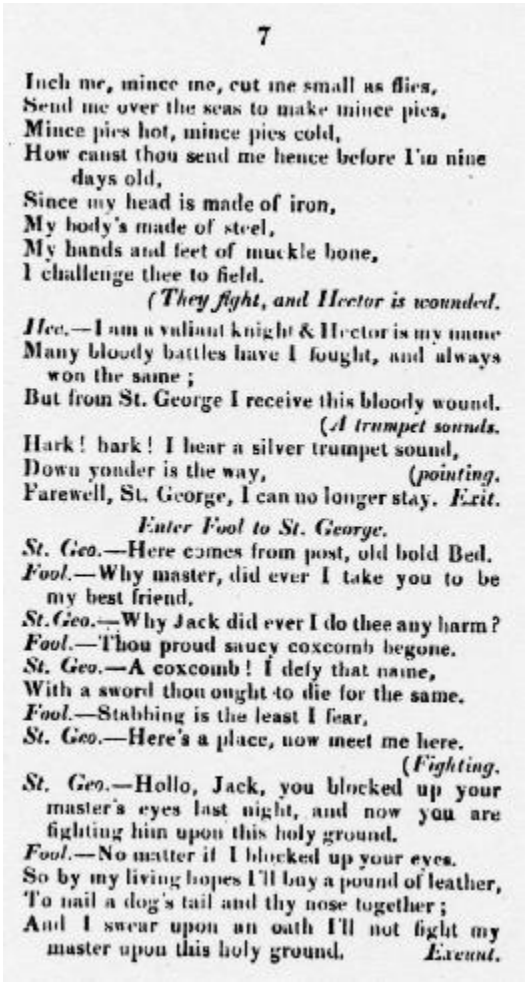
Scene, a Field; to be continued throughout the Play.

Enter St. George. [solus.]

I AM St. George, who from old England sprung,
Many bloody deeds & wonders I have done;
I've practised many a victorious thing,
My famous name throughout the world doth ring,
I followed a fair lady up to the castle gate,
Wherein I put the doors to fate;

J.Pearce & Son: *The Mummers Act*

Example 9

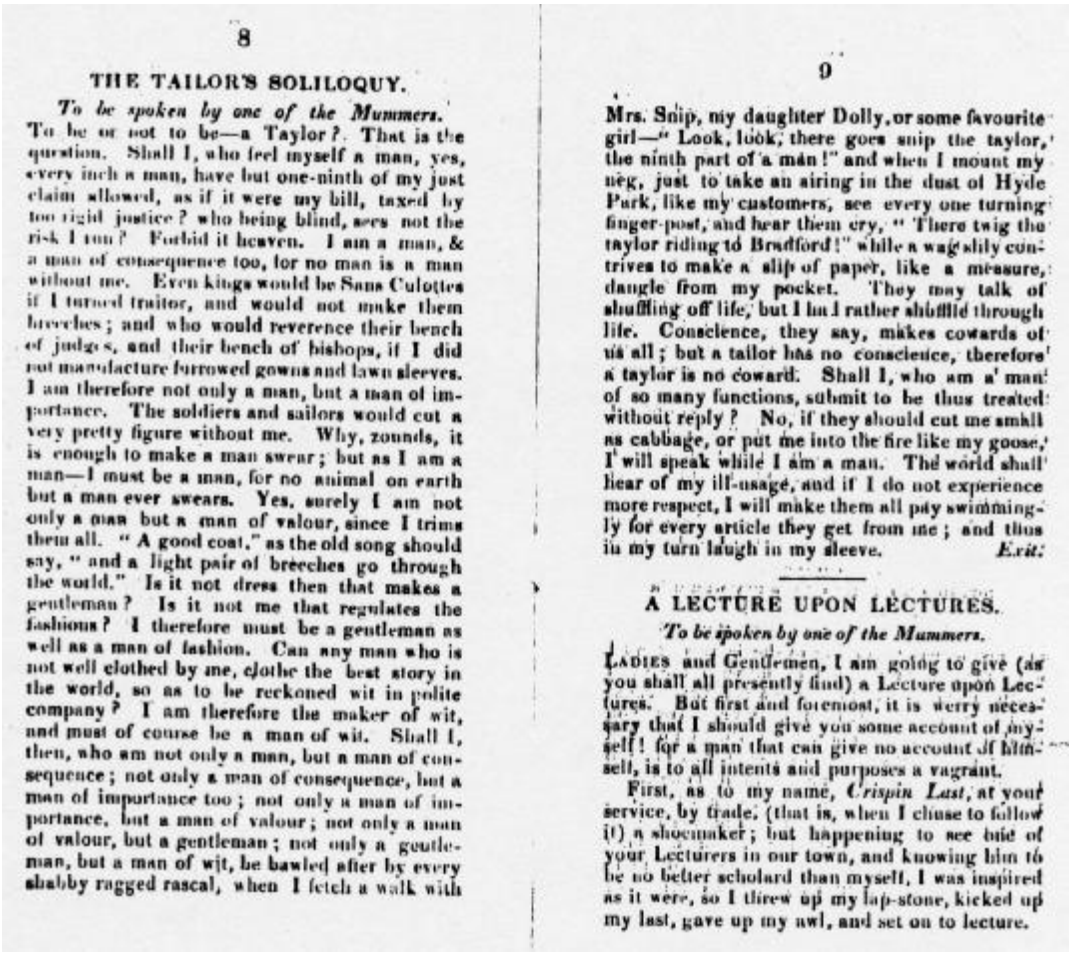


7

Inch me, mince me, cut me small as flies,
Send me over the seas to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
How canst thou send me hence before I'm nine
days old,
Since my head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel,
My hands and feet of muckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.
(They fight, and Hector is wounded.
Hec.—I am a valiant knight & Hector is my name
Many bloody battles have I fought, and always
won the same;
But from St. George I receive this bloody wound.
(A trumpet sounds.
Hark! hark! I hear a silver trumpet sound,
Down yonder is the way, *(pointing.*
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay. *Exit.*
Enter Fool to St. George.
St. Geo.—Here comes from post, old bold Bed.
Fool.—Why master, did ever I take you to be
my best friend.
St. Geo.—Why Jack did ever I do thee any harm?
Fool.—Thou proud saucy coxcomb begone.
St. Geo.—A coxcomb! I defy that name,
With a sword thou ought to die for the same.
Fool.—Stabbing is the least I fear,
St. Geo.—Here's a place, now meet me here.
(Fighting.
St. Geo.—Hollo, Jack, you blocked up your
master's eyes last night, and now you are
fighting him upon this holy ground.
Fool.—No matter if I blocked up your eyes.
So by my living hopes I'll buy a pound of leather,
To nail a dog's tail and thy nose together;
And I swear upon an oath I'll not fight my
master upon this holy ground. *Exeunt.*

J.Pearce & Son: *The Mummers Act*

Example 10



8

THE TAILOR'S SOLILOQUY.

To be spoken by one of the Mummers.

To be or not to be—a Taylor? That is the question. Shall I, who feel myself a man, yes, every inch a man, have but one-ninth of my just claim allowed, as if it were my bill, taxed by too rigid justice? who being blind, sees not the risk I run? Forbid it heaven. I am a man, & a man of consequence too, for no man is a man without me. Even kings would be Sans Culottes if I turned traitor, and would not make them breeches; and who would reverence their bench of judges, and their bench of bishops, if I did not manufacture furrowed gowns and lawn sleeves. I am therefore not only a man, but a man of importance. The soldiers and sailors would cut a very pretty figure without me. Why, zounds, it is enough to make a man swear; but as I am a man—I must be a man, for no animal on earth but a man ever swears. Yes, surely I am not only a man but a man of valour, since I trims them all. "A good coat," as the old song should say, "and a light pair of breeches go through the world." Is it not dress then that makes a gentleman? Is it not me that regulates the fashions? I therefore must be a gentleman as well as a man of fashion. Can any man who is not well clothed by me, clothe the best story in the world, so as to be reckoned wit in polite company? I am therefore the maker of wit, and must of course be a man of wit. Shall I, then, who am not only a man, but a man of consequence; not only a man of consequence, but a man of importance too; not only a man of importance, but a man of valour; not only a man of valour, but a gentleman; not only a gentleman, but a man of wit, be bawled after by every shabby ragged rascal, when I fetch a walk with

9

Mrs. Snip, my daughter Dolly, or some favourite girl—"Look, look, there goes snip the taylor, the ninth part of a man!" and when I mount my nag, just to take an airing in the dust of Hyde Park, like my customers, see every one turning finger-post, and hear them cry, "There twig the taylor riding to Bradford!" while a waggishly contrives to make a slip of paper, like a measure, dangle from my pocket. They may talk of shuffling off life, but I had rather shuffle through life. Conscience, they say, makes cowards of us all; but a tailor has no conscience, therefore a taylor is no coward. Shall I, who am a man of so many functions, submit to be thus treated without reply? No, if they should cut me small as cabbage, or put me into the fire like my goose, I will speak while I am a man. The world shall hear of my ill-usage, and if I do not experience more respect, I will make them all pay swimmingly for every article they get from me; and thus in my turn laugh in my sleeve. *Exit.*

A LECTURE UPON LECTURES.

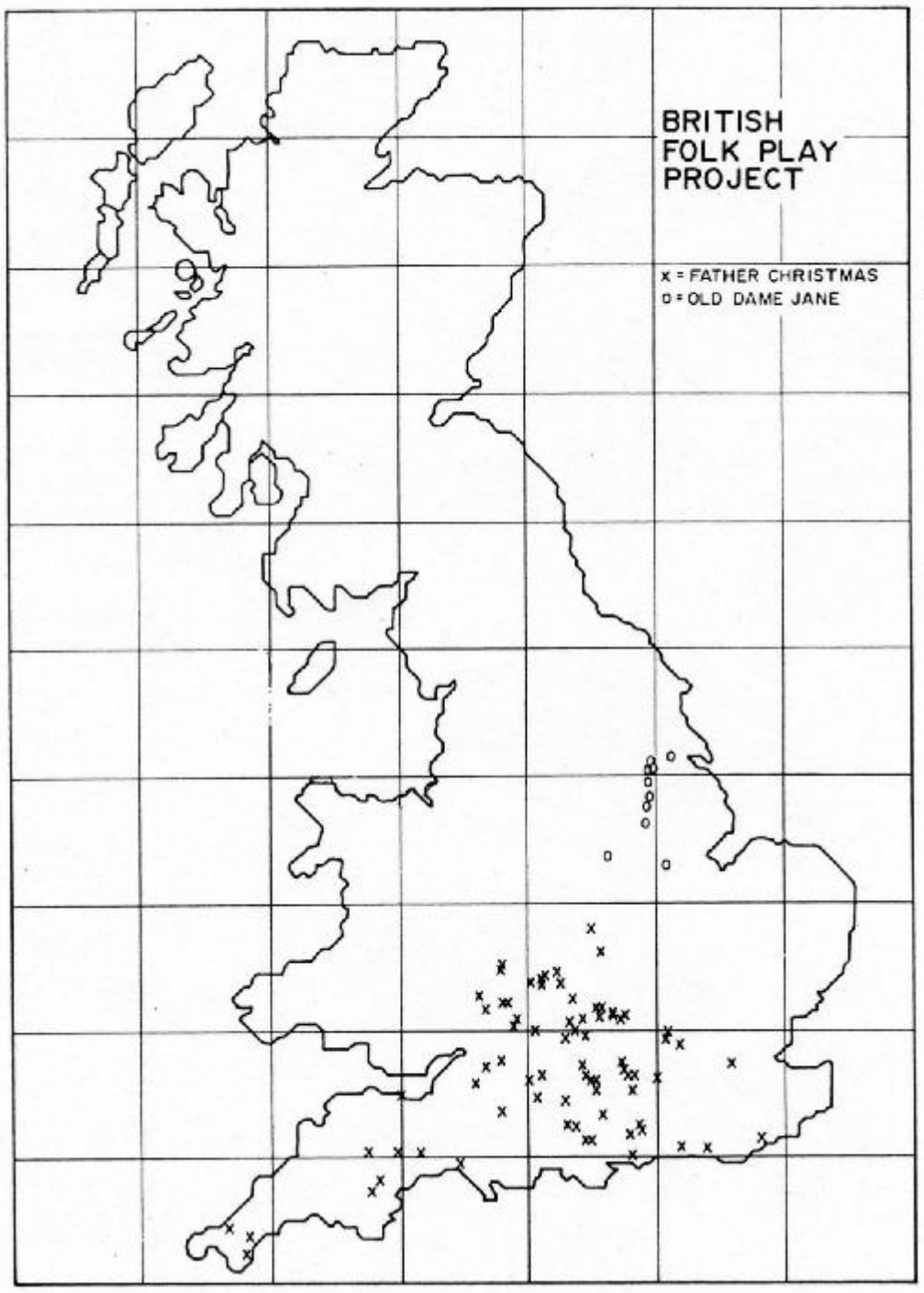
To be spoken by one of the Mummers.

LADIES and Gentlemen, I am going to give (as you shall all presently find) a Lecture upon Lectures. But first and foremost, it is verry necessary that I should give you some account of myself! for a man that can give no account of himself, is to all intents and purposes a vagrant.

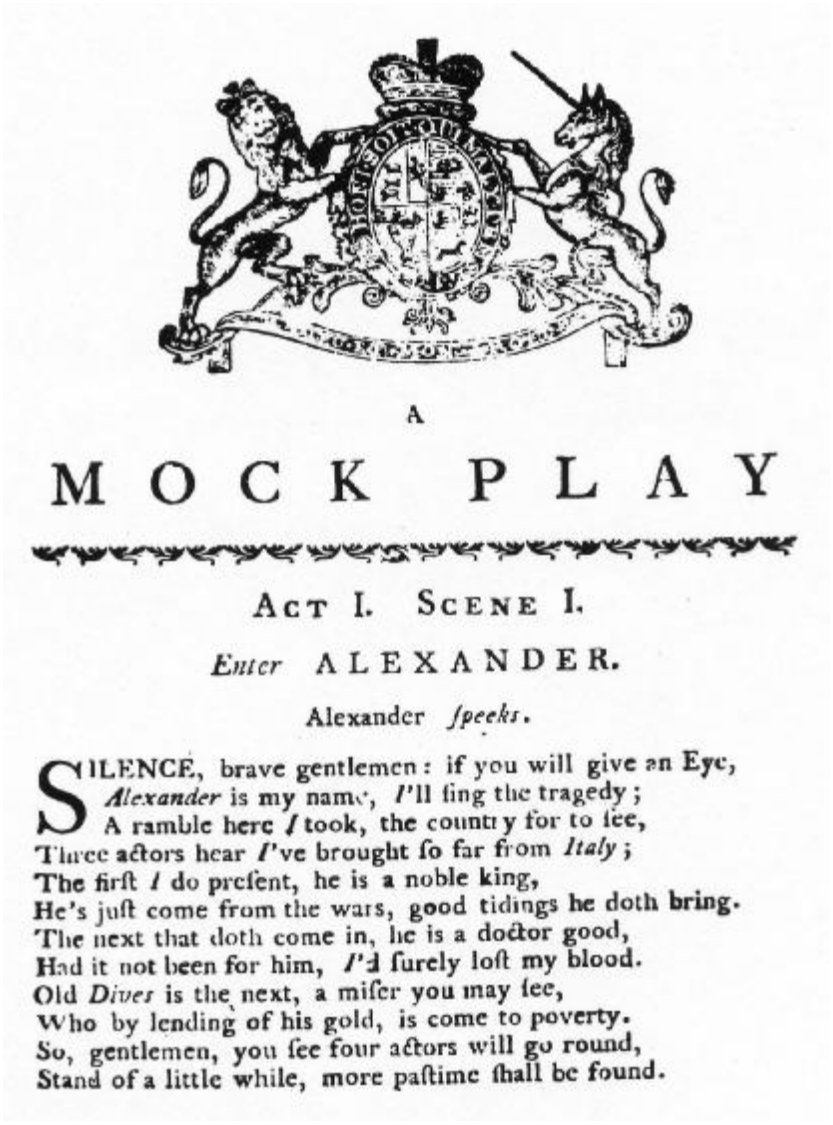
First, as to my name, *Crispin Last*, at your service, by trade, (that is, when I chuse to follow it) a shoemaker; but happening to see one of your Lecturers in our town, and knowing him to be no better scholard than myself, I was inspired as it were, so I threw up my lap-stone, kicked up my last, gave up my awl, and set on to lecture.

J.Pearce & Son: *The Mummers Act*

Example 11


BRITISH
FOLK PLAY
PROJECT
x = FATHER CHRISTMAS
o = OLD DAME JANE

Example 12



A

MOCK PLAY

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter ALEXANDER.

Alexander *ſpeeks.*

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 hear *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 doctor good,
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,
Stand of a little while, more paſtime ſhall be found.

J.White: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 13

(4)

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 does 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 merry actors that ſhew the pleaſent play,
Step in, thou king of *Egypt*, and clear the way.

King of Egypt. I am the king of *Egypt*, as plainly does appear,
And prince *George* he is my only ſon and heir:
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;
'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 'ſcap'd:
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, *Stacker*, hold, pray do not be ſo hot,
For on this ſpot thou knoweſt not who thou's got;

Example 14

K. of Egypt. Sir, to expreſs thy beauty, I am no 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—le 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.

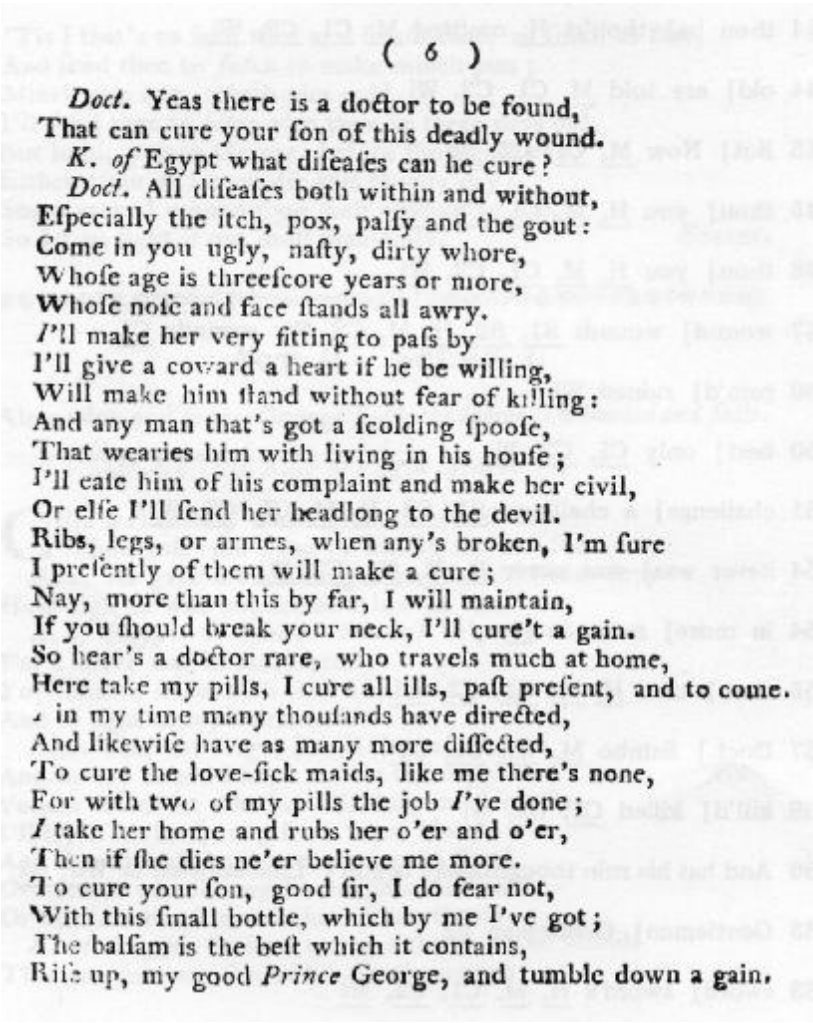
The CONCLUSION.

Bounſer buckler, velvet's dear,
And *Chriſtmas* comes but once a year;
Thought when it comes, it brings good chear,
But farewell *Chriſtmas* once a year.
Farewell, 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,
We've done the beſt we can, and the beſt can do no more.

FINIS.

J.White: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 15



(6)

Doct. Yeas there is a doctor to be found,
That can cure your ſon of this 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 ſpooſe,
That wearies him with living in his houſe;
I'll eaſe him of his complaint and make her civil,
Or elſe I'll ſend her headlong to the devil.
Ribs, legs, or armes, when any's broken, 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 cure't a gain.
So hear'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 many thouſands have directed,
And likewiſe have as many more diſſected,
To cure the love-ſick maids, 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 tumble down a gain.

J.White: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 16

The Infallible Mountebank
OR,
QUACK DOCTOR

SEE Sirs, see here!
A Doctor rare,
Who Travels much at home!
Here take my Bills,
I Cure all Ills,
Past, Present and to come;
The Cramp, the Stich,
The Squint, the Itch,
The Gout, the Stone, the Pox:
The Mulligrubs,
The Bonny Scrubs,
And all *Pandora's* Box;
Thousands I've Dissected,
Thousands new Erected,
And such Cures effected,
As none e'er can tell:
Let the Palsie shake ye,
Let the Chollick rack ye,
Let the Crinkums break ye,
Let the Murrain take ye,

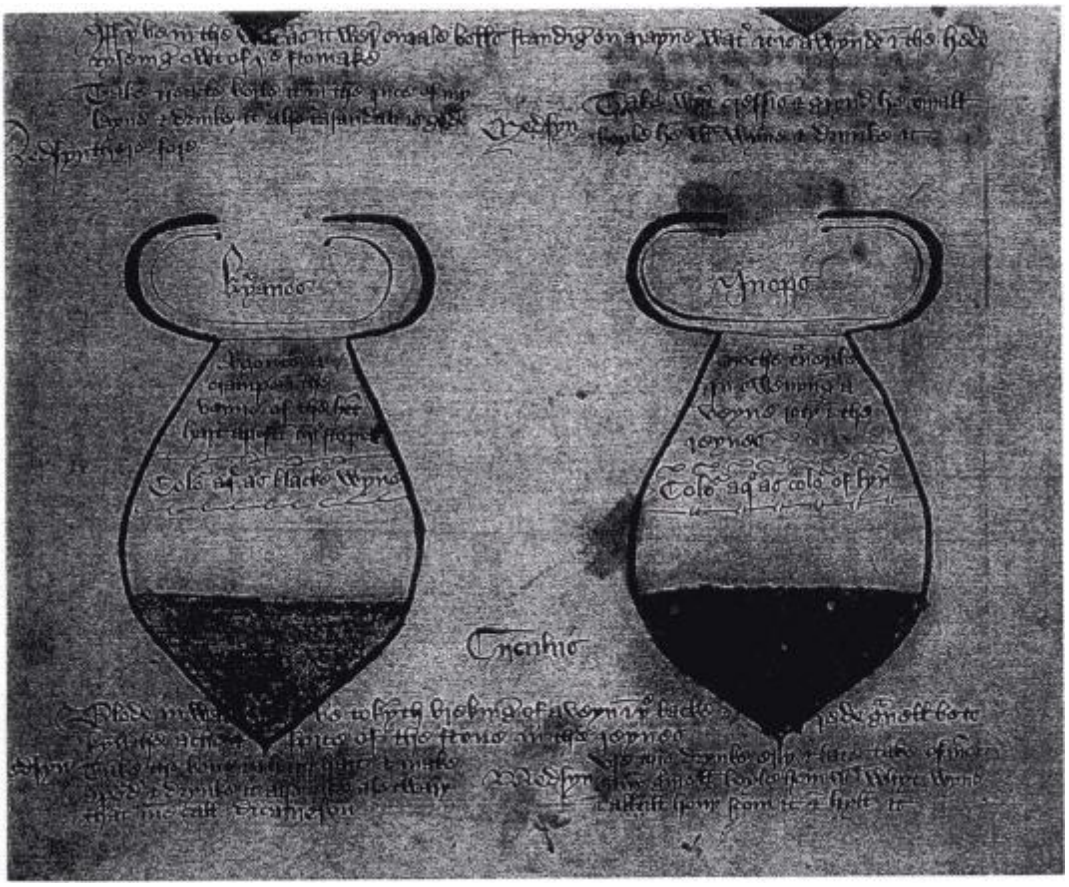
Come Beaus, who sprain'd your back
Great Belly'd Maids,
Old Founder'd Jades,
And pepper'd Vizard Cracks,
I soon remove
The pains of Love,
And cure the Love-sick Maid;
The Hot, the Cold,
The Young, the Old,
The Living and the Dead
I clear the Lass,
With Wainscot Face,
And from pimginets free,
Plump Ladies Red,
Like *Salmon's* Head
With Soaping Rattafia.
This with a jirk,
Will do your Work,
And Scour you o're and o're,
Read Judge and Try,
And if you Die,

Bodleian Library: Firth b.21(61) verso

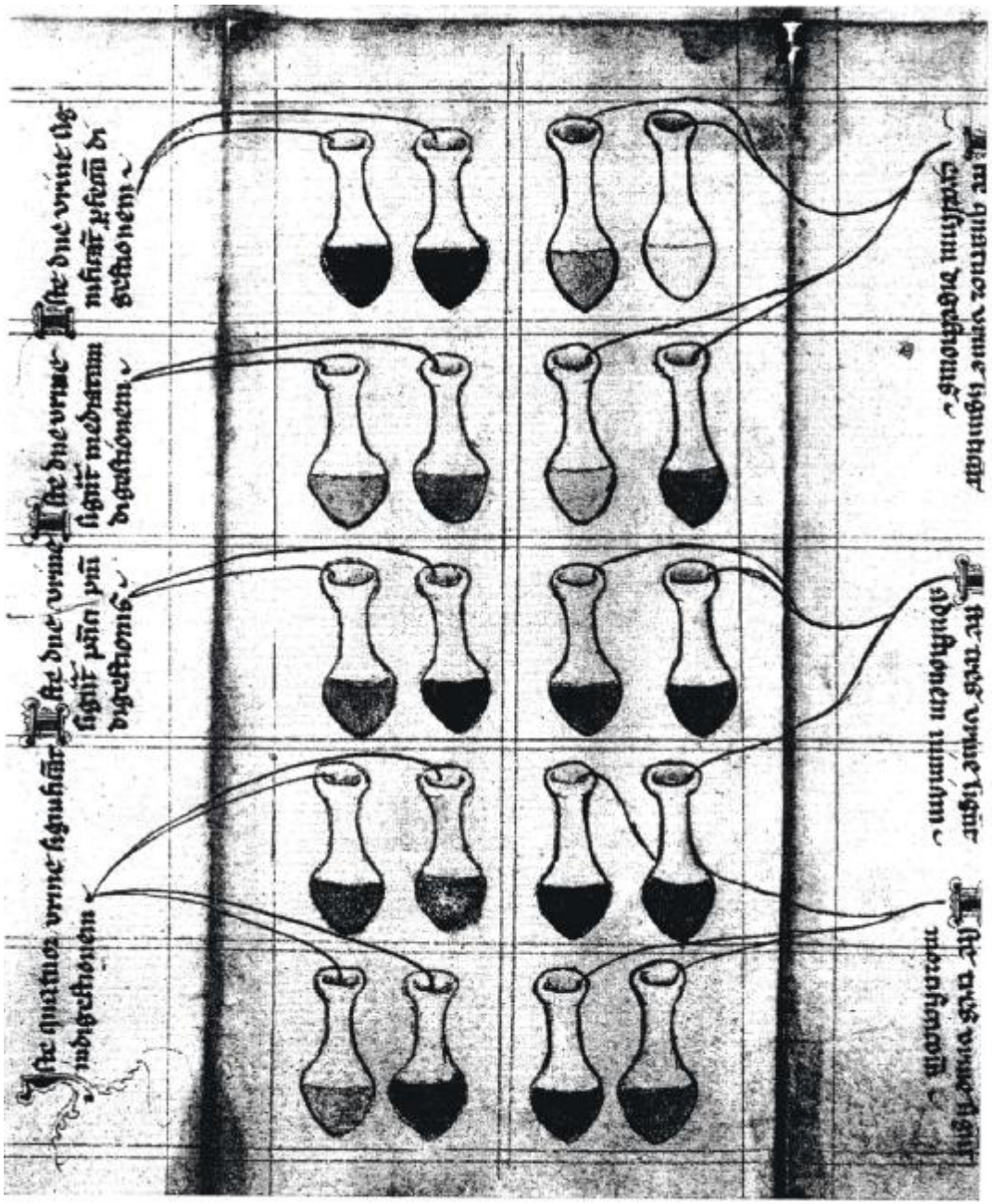
Example 17

Example 18

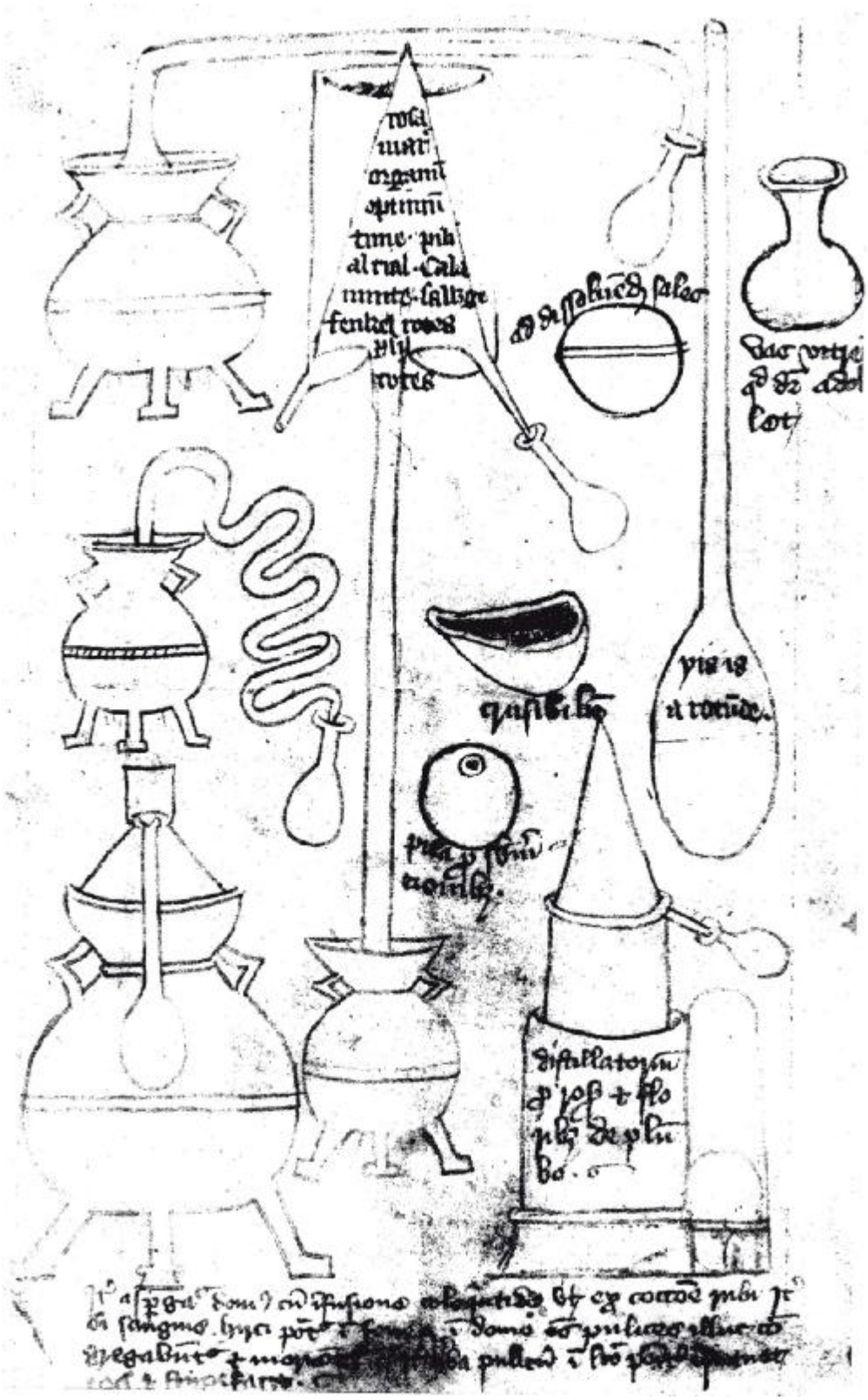
Example 19



Example 20



Example 21

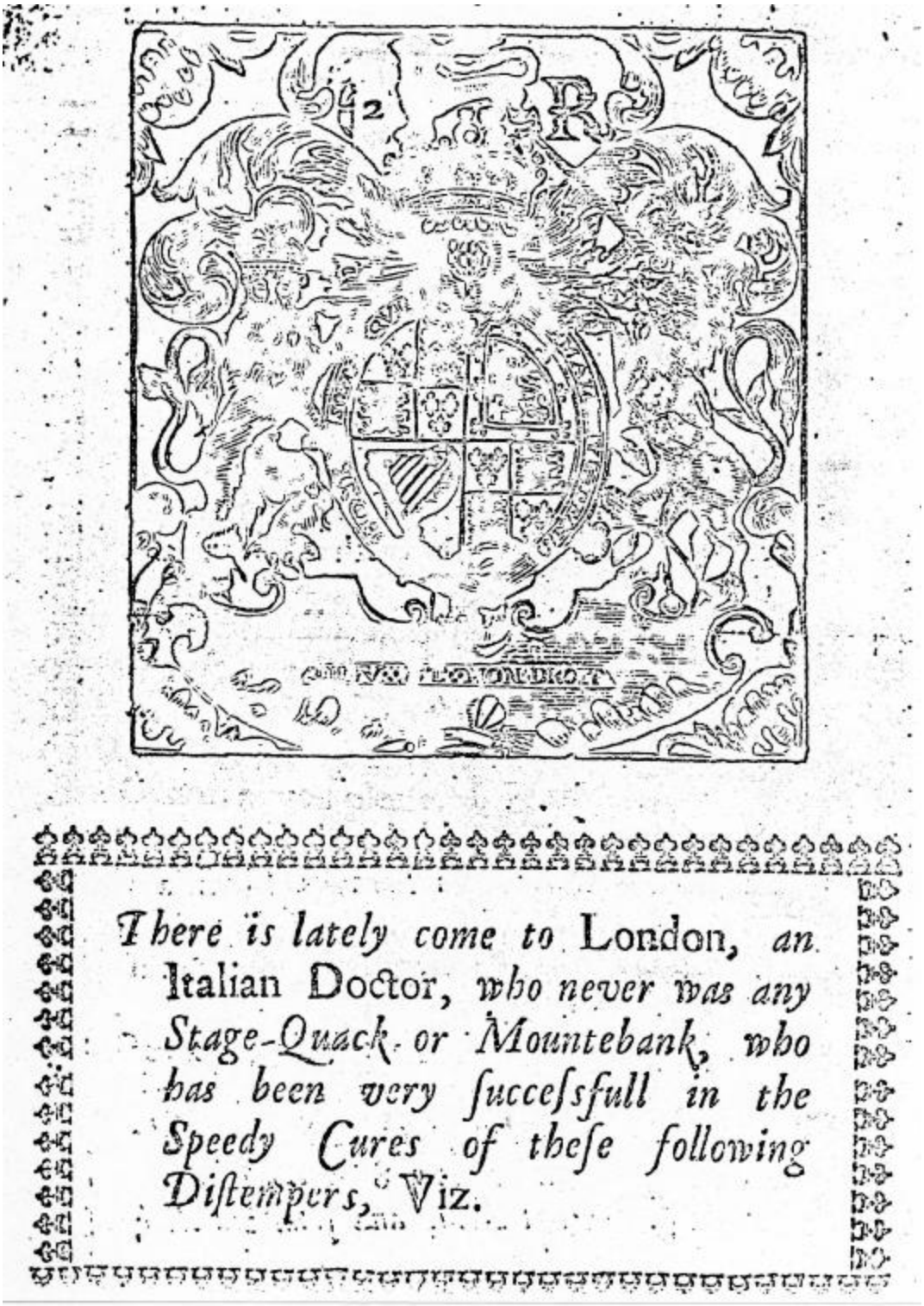


Example 22

Example 23

Example 24

Example 25



There is lately come to London, *an* Italian Doctor, *who never was any Stage-Quack or Mountebank, who has been very ſucceſsfull in the Speedy Cures of theſe following Diſtempers, Viz.*

Example 26

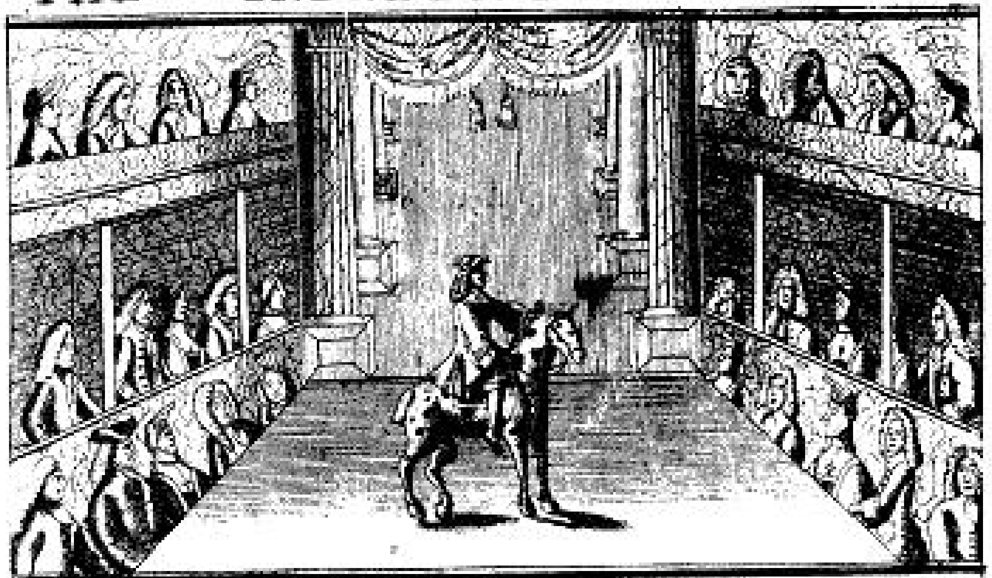
SEE SIRS, see here! a Doctor rare,
who Travels much at Home,
Here take my Bills,
I cure all Ills,
past, present, and to come;
The Cramp, the Stitch,
The Gout, the Itch,
The Squirt, the Stone, the Pox:
The Mulligrubs,
The Bonny Scrubbs,
and all Pandora's Box:
Thousands I've Dissected,
Thousands new erected,
and such cures effected,
as none e're can tell:
Let the Palsie shake ye,
Let the Chollick rack ye,
Let the Crinkums Lwrak ye,
Let the Murrain take ye,
take this and you are well,
come nits so keen,
Devour'd with Spleen;
come Beaus who sprain'd your backs,
Great Belly'd Maids,
Old Foundered Jades,
and pepper'd Vizard Cracks,
I soon remove,
The pains of Love,
and cure the Love-sick Maid;
The Hot, the Cold,
The Young, the Old,
the Living, and the Dead:
I clear the Lass,
With Wainscoat Face,
and from Pimpinels free,
Plump Ladys red,
Like Saracen's Head,
with teaping Rattafia.
Thy with a Jirk,
Will do your Work,
and Scour you o're and o're;
Read Judge, and Try,
And if you Die,
never believe me more —— 25

Example 27


The QUACK-DOCTOR Outwitted.
I
The Devil did complain he was not well
And would go take some Physick out of Hell;
To Britain, France and Spain with speed he got;
Where all refus'd him he did burn so hot.
II
In haste he then to Germany did hye,
The cunning of a Quack-Doctor to try;
Where in a Market-place upon a Stage,
He found a Fellow could all Griefs asswage:
III
Doctor (quoth he) I want some of thy Skill,
For I do find I am exceeding ill,
And any thing for ease I will indure;
What! wilt thou undertake my pain to cure?
IV
If thou canst ease the Malady I have,
Thou shalt have Gold, even what thy self will crave:
Gentleman, (said this Doctor to the Devil)
Upon my Life I'll rid you of this Evil.
V
Make unto me those Griefs you have but known,
And with the curing them let me alone.
Why Sir (quoth he) my Head with Horns doth ake,
My Brains like Brimstone doth Tobacco take;
VI
My Eyes are full of ever-burning Fire,
My Tongue a drap of Water doth desire;
Abour my Heart doth crawling Serpents creep,
And I can neither Eat, nor Drink, nor Sleep;
VII
There's no Diseases whatsoe're they be,
But I have all of them impos'd on me;
All Torments that the Tongue of Man can name,
Within, without, in a continual Flame:
VIII
Quoth the Quack-Doctor, I will undertake
A sound Man of you in a Month to make.
Wilt please your Worship, show me where you dwell?
Marry (quoth he) my Chamber is in Hell.
IX
Thy Charges in thy Journey I will bear,
And I'll prefer the to the Devil there:
With speed get up, I'll take thee on my back,
The World may spare thee and in Hell we lack.
JN.
Printed and Sold by Samuel Lyne Map and Printseller at the Globe in Vinegate Street London.

Example 28

THE INFALLIBLE DOCTOR.



1

From France, from Spain, from Rome I come,
And from all Parts of Christendom,
For to cure all ſtrange diseases,
Come take phyſick he that pleaſes:
Come ye broken Maids that ſcatter,
And can never hold your water,
I can teach you it to keep;
And other things are very meet,
As groaning backward in your ſleep ......

2

Come an ugly dirty whore,
That is at leaſt Threeſcore or more,
Whose face and nose stands all awry,
As if you'd fear to paſs her by;
I can make her plump and young,
Luſty lively and also ſtrong,
Honeſt, active, fit to wed,
And can recall her Maiden head;
All this is done as soon as said,

3

If any man has got a Wife,
That makes him weary of his Life
With ſcolding, yoking in the house,
As tho the Devil was turn'd loose;
Let him but repair to me,
I can cure her presently
With one Pill I'll make her civil,
And rid her Huſband of that evil,
Or send her head-long to the Devil .....

4

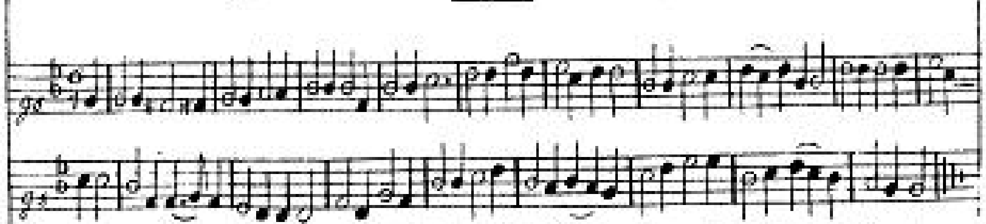
The Pox, the Palsey, and the Gout,
Pains within, and Ache without,
There is no disease but I
Can find a present remedy:
Broken Legs and Arms, I'm sure,
Are the twiſt Wounds I cure:
Nay more than that I will maintain,
Break your Neck, I'll set it again,
Or ask you nothing for my pain ......

5

Or if any man do chance,
To want a heart to fight 'gainst France,
I'll put him in one, if he be willing,
Shall make him fight and ne'er fear killing
Or any one that has been dead,
Seven long years and buried;
I can him to life reſtore,
And make him sound as he was before,
Else let him never truſt me more.....

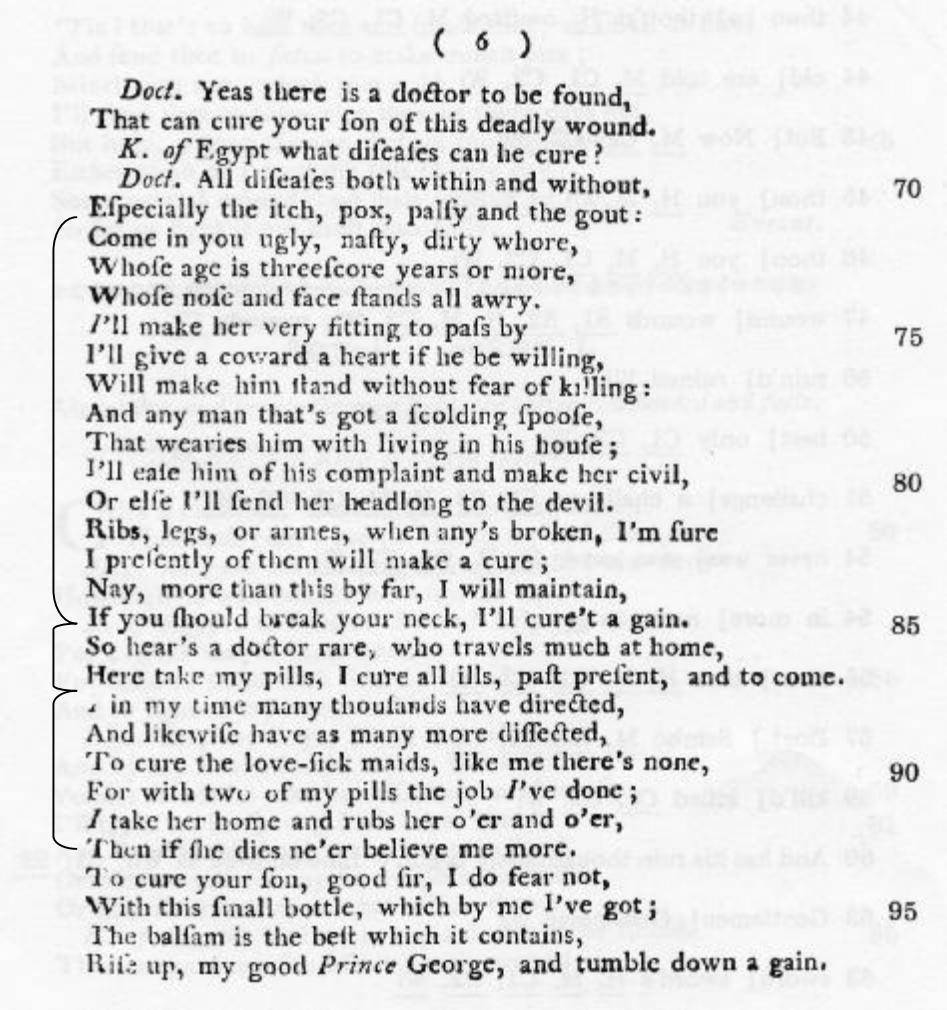
6

If any man deſire to live
A thousand ages let him give
Me a thousand pounds, and I
Will warrant him Life unleſs he die;
Nay more I'll teach him a better trick,
Shall keep him well, if he ne'er be sick;
But if I no money see,
And he with diseases troubled be,
Then he may thank himself not me ....



Printed and Sold by Sutton Nicholls *against ye* George Inn *in Aldersgate Street.*

Example 29



(6)

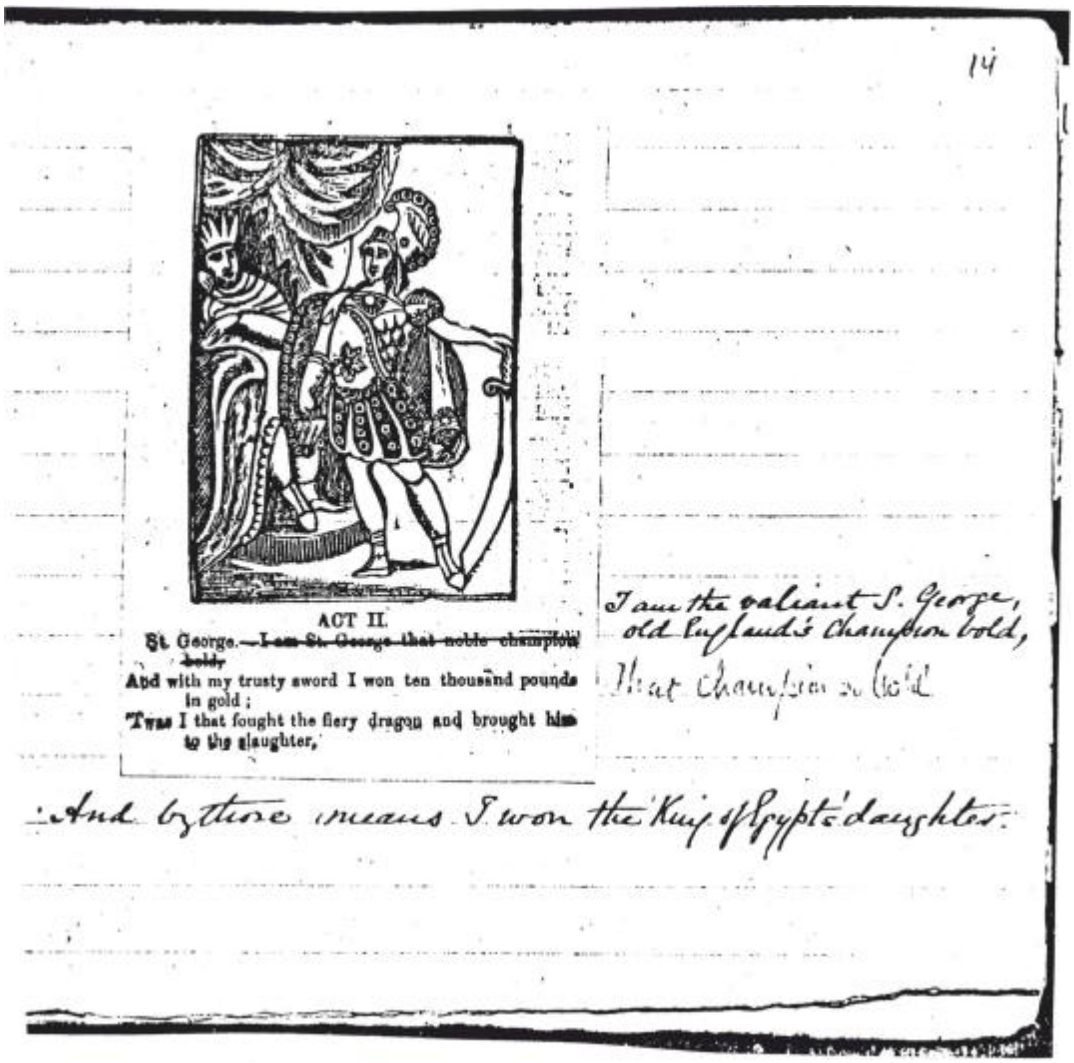
Doct. Yeas there is a doctor to be found,
That can cure your ſon of this deadly wound.
K. of Egypt what diſeaſes can he cure?
Doct. All diſeaſes both within and without,
Eſpecially the itch, pox, palſy and the gout:
Come in you ugly, naſty, dirty whore,
Whoſe age is threeſcore years or more,
Whoſe noſe 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 ſpooſe,
That wearies him with living in his houſe;
I'll eaſe him of his complaint and make her civil,
Or elſe I'll ſend her headlong to the devil.
Ribs, legs, or armes, when any's broken, 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 cure't a gain.
So hear'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 many thouſands have directed,
And likewiſe have as many more diſſected,
To cure the love-ſick maids, 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 tumble down a gain.

J.White: *Alexander and the King of Egypt*

Example 30

Houldsworth Schools: *The Pace Egg*

Example 31



14

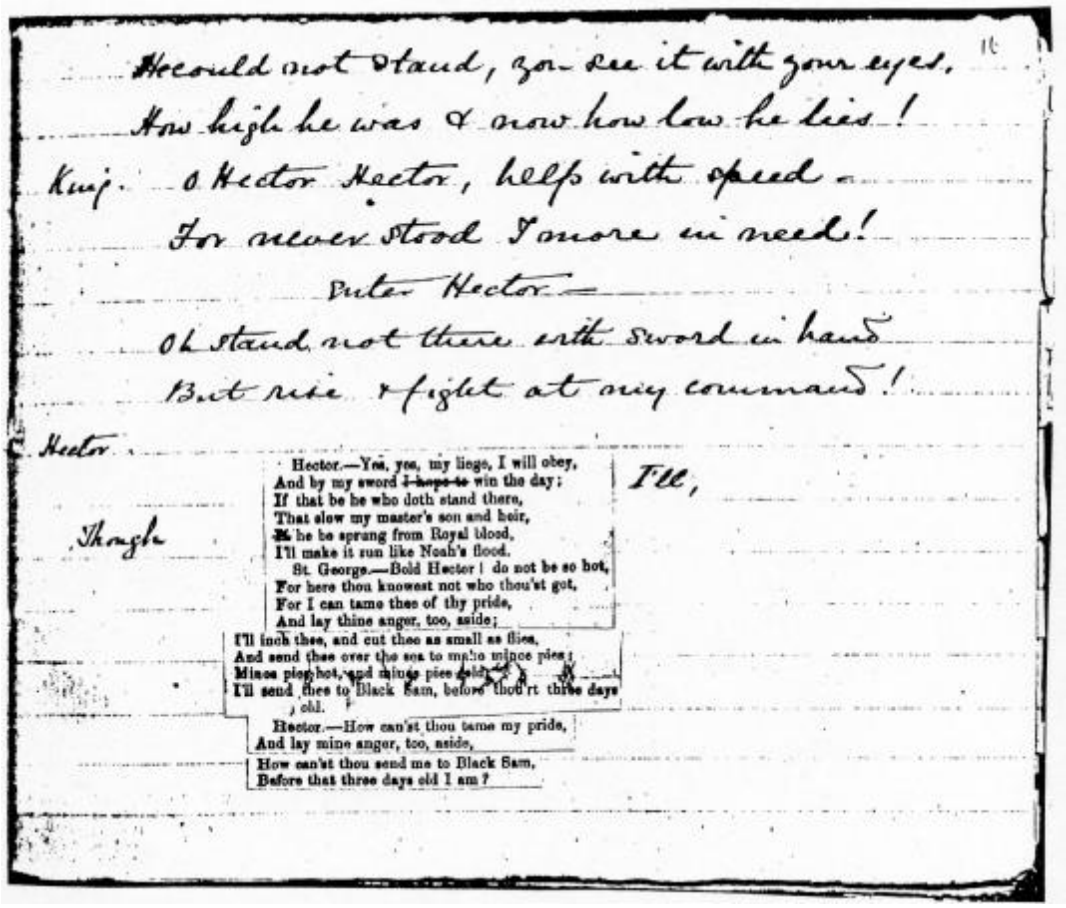
ACT II.

St George.—~~I am St. George that noble champion bold~~
And with my trusty sword I won ten thousand pounds in gold;
'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter,

I am the valiant S. George,
old England's champion bold,
Heat champion in the world

And by time means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

Example 32



He could not stand, you see it with your eyes,
How high he was & now how low he lies!
Kmj. O Hector Hector, helps with speed
For never stood I more in need!
Enter Hector
Oh stand not there with sword in hand
But rise & fight at my commands!

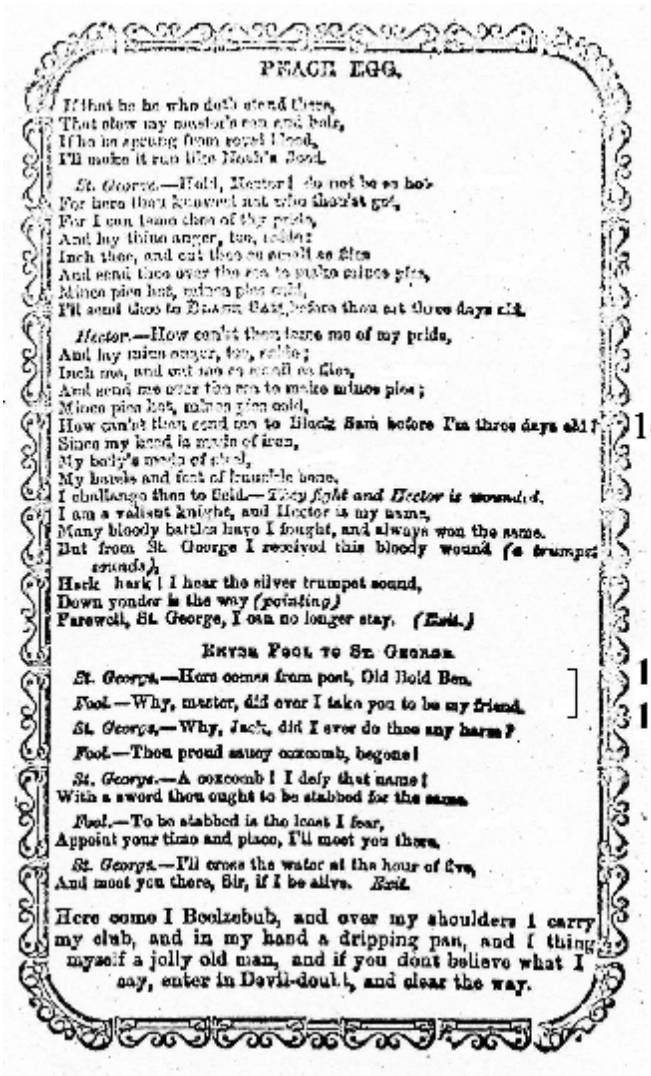
Hector

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 sprang from Royal blood,
I'll make it run like Noah's flood.
St. George.—Bold Hector! do not be so hot,
For here thou knowest not who thou'st got,
For I can tame thee of thy pride,
And lay thine anger, too, aside;
I'll inch thee, and cut thee as small as flies,
And send thee over the sea to make mince pies;
Mince pies hot, and mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam, before thou'rt three days old.
Hector.—How can'st thou tame my pride,
And lay mine anger, too, aside,
How can'st thou send me to Black Sam,
Before that three days old I am?

I'll,

Though

Example 33



PEACE EGG.

If that he be who don't stand Clear,
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 bold
For here that knowest not who thou'st got,
For I can lame thee of thy pride,
And lay thine anger, too, beside:
Inch thee, and cut thee as small as flies
And send thee over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam, before thou art three days old.

Hector.—How can'st thou learn me of my pride,
And lay mine anger, too, beside;
Inch me, and cut me as small as flies,
And send me over the sea to make mince pies;
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
How can'st thou send me to Black Sam before I'm three days old? 143
Since my head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel,
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.—*They fight and Hector is wounded.*
I am a valiant knight, and Hector is my name,
Many bloody battles have I fought, and always won the same.
But from St. George I received this bloody wound (*a trumpet sounds*),
Hark hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound,
Down yonder is the way (*pointing*)
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay. (*Exit.*)

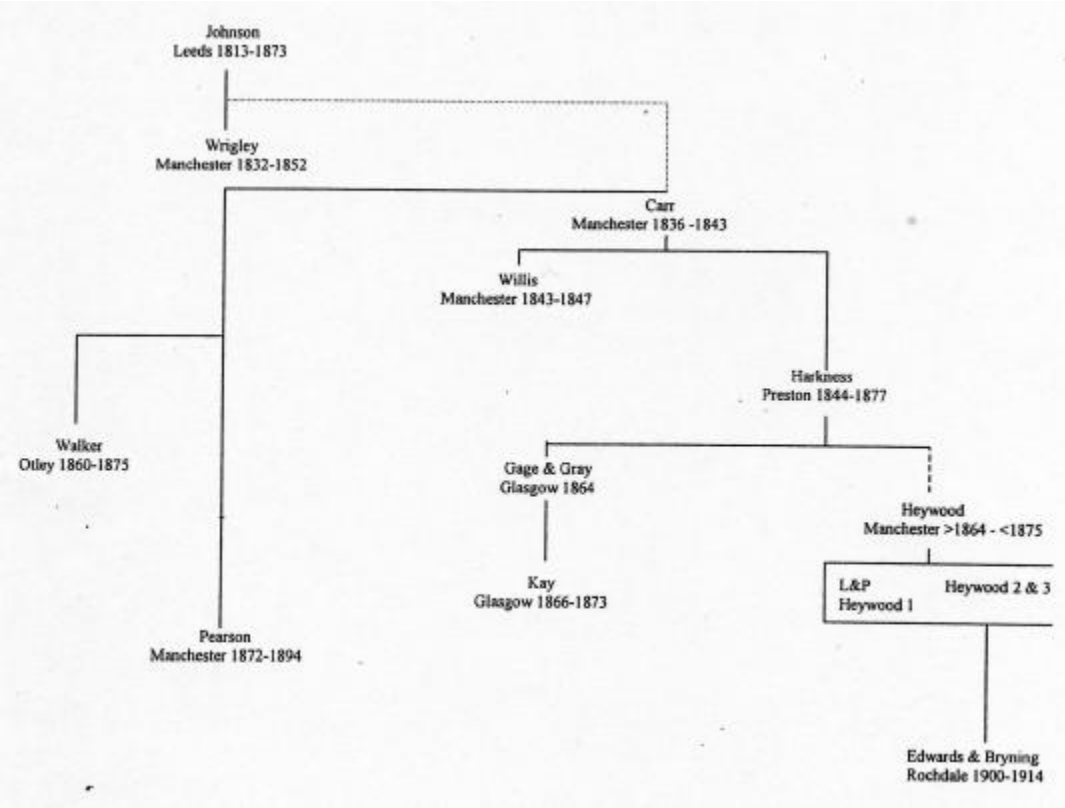
ENTER FOOL TO ST. GEORGE.

St. George.—Here comes from post, Old Bold Ben,] 154
Fool.—Why, master, did ever I take you to be my friend,] 155
St. George.—Why, Jack, did I ever do thee any harm?
Fool.—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,
Appoint your time and place, I'll meet you there.
St. George.—I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And meet you there, Sir, if I be alive. *Exit.*

Here come I Beelzebub, and over my shoulders I carry my club, and in my hand a dripping pan, and I think myself a jolly old man, and if you dont believe what I say, enter in Devil-doubt, and clear the way.

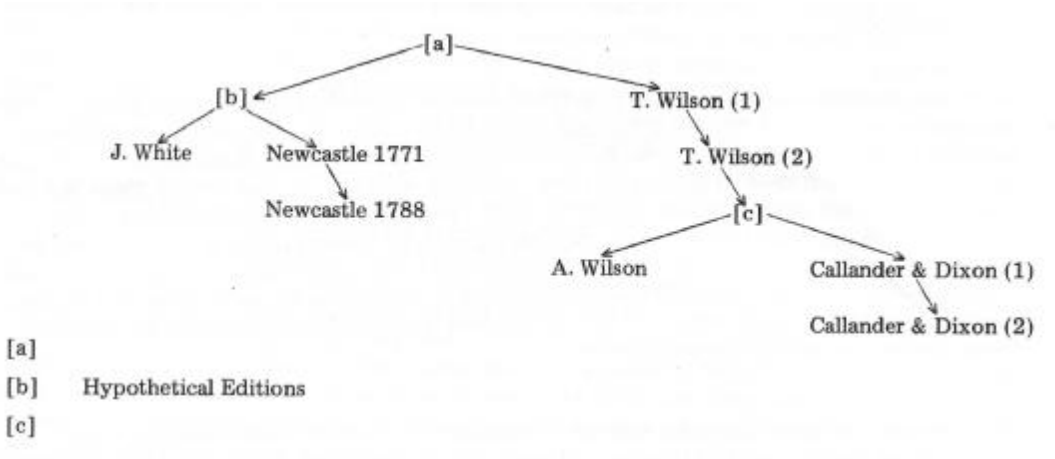
J.Johnson: *The Peace Egg*

Example 34



The Peace Egg Chapbooks – Suggested Family Tree

Example 35



Schema of Relationships of the Editions of the
Alexander and the King of Egypt Chapbooks

Example 36

PEACE EGG.

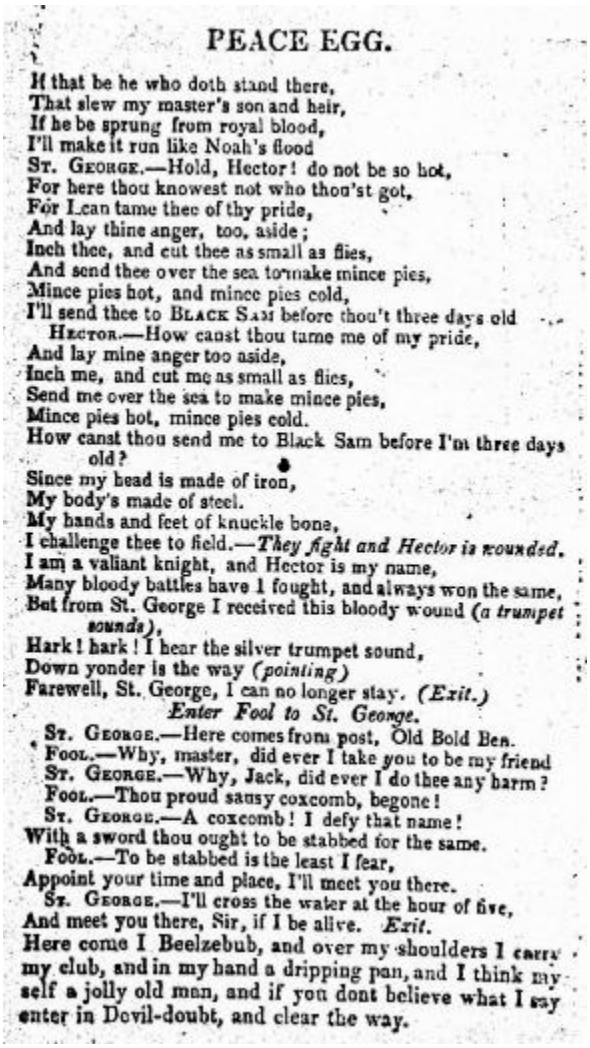
If that be he who doth stand there,
That slew my master's son and heir,
If he be sprung from royal blood,
I'll make it run like Noah's flood
ST. GEORGE.—Hold, Hector! do not be so hot,
For here thou knowest not who thou'st got,
For I can tame thee of thy pride,
And lay thine anger, too, aside;
Inch thee, and cut thee as small as flies,
And send thee over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, and mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to BLACK SAM before thou't three days old
HECTOR.—How canst thou tame me of my pride,
And lay mine anger too aside,
Inch me, and cut me as small as flies,
Send me over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold.
How canst thou send me to Black Sam before I'm three days old?
Since my head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel.
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.—*They fight and Hector is wounded.*
I am a valiant knight, and Hector is my name,
Many bloody battles have I fought, and always won the same,
But from St. George I received this bloody wound (*a trumpet sounds*),
Hark! hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound,
Down yonder is the way (*pointing*)
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay. (*Exit.*)

Enter Fool to St. George.

ST. GEORGE.—Here comes from post, Old Bold Ben.
FOOL.—Why, master, did ever I take you to be my friend
ST. GEORGE.—Why, Jack, did ever I do thee any harm?
FOOL.—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,
Appoint your time and place, I'll meet you there.
ST. GEORGE.—I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And meet you there, Sir, if I be alive. *Exit.*
Here come I Beelzebub, and over my shoulders I carry my club, and in my hand a dripping pan, and I think myself a jolly old man, and if you dont believe what I say enter in Devil-doubt, and clear the way.

T.Pearson: *The Peace Egg*

Example 37

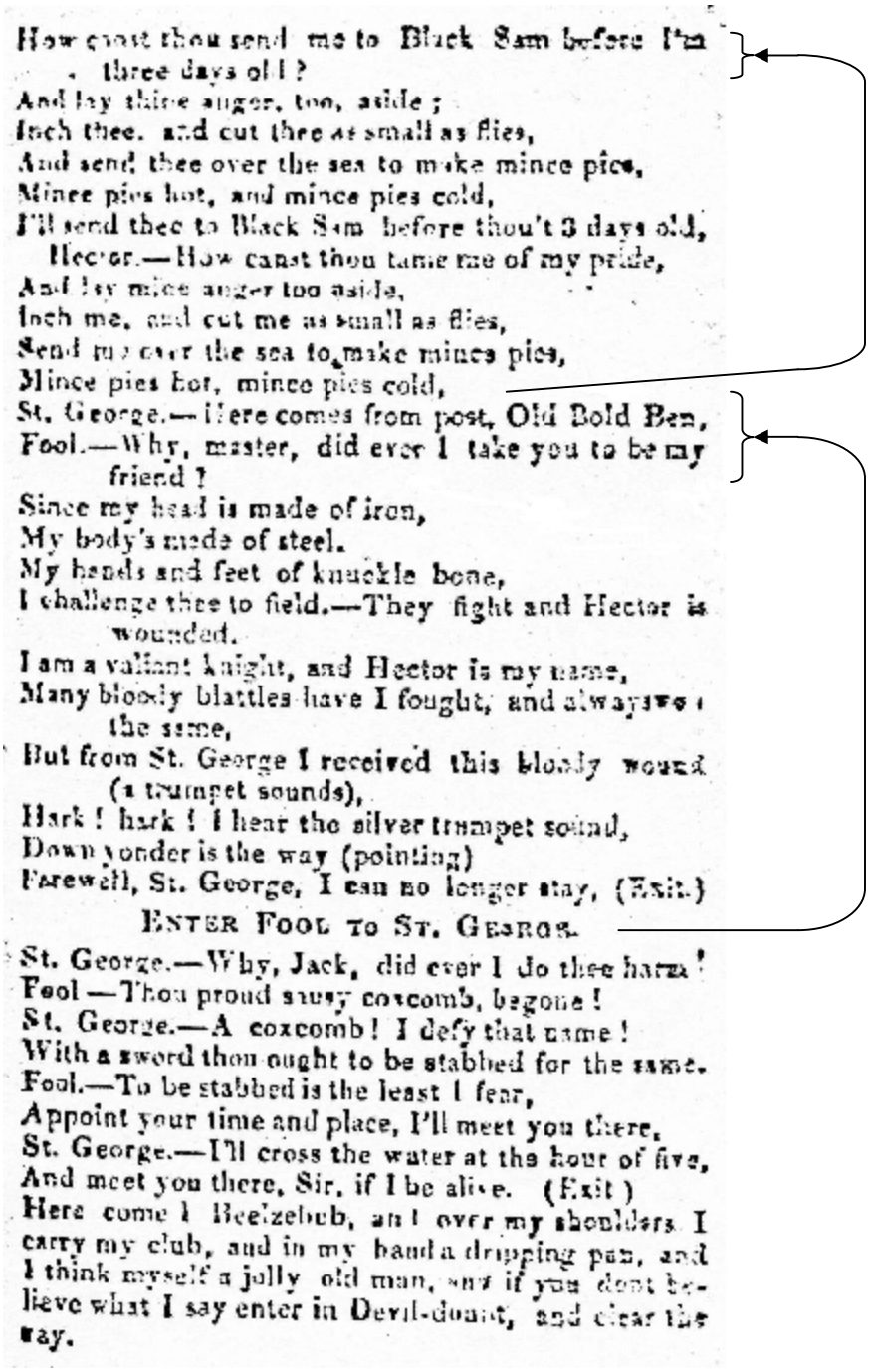


PEACE EGG.

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 here thou knowest not who thou'st got,
For I can tame thee of thy pride,
And lay thine anger, too, aside;
Inch thee, and cut thee as small as flies,
And send thee over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, and mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to BLACK SAM before thou't three days old
HECTOR.—How canst thou tame me of my pride,
And lay mine anger too aside,
Inch me, and cut me as small as flies,
Send me over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold.
How canst thou send me to Black Sam before I'm three days old?
Since my head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel.
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.—*They fight and Hector is wounded.*
I am a valiant knight, and Hector is my name,
Many bloody battles have I fought, and always won the same,
But from St. George I received this bloody wound (*a trumpet sounds*),
Hark! hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound,
Down yonder is the way (*pointing*)
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay. (*Exit.*)
Enter Fool to St. George.
ST. GEORGE.—Here comes from post, Old Bold Ben.
FOOL.—Why, master, did ever I take *you* to be my friend
ST. GEORGE.—Why, Jack, did ever I do thee any harm?
FOOL.—Thou proud sausy 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,
Appoint your time and place, I'll meet you there.
ST. GEORGE.—I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And meet you there, Sir, if I be alive. *Exit.*
Here come I Beelzebub, and over my shoulders I carry my club, and in my hand a dripping pan, and I think myself a jolly old man, and if you dont believe what I say enter in Dovil-doubt, and clear the way.

J.Wrigley: *The Peace Egg*

Example 38



How canst thou send me to Black Sam before I'm
three days old?
And lay thine anger, too, aside;
Inch thee, and cut thee as small as flies,
And send thee over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, and mince pies cold,
I'll send thee to Black Sam before thou't 3 days old,
Hector.—How canst thou tame me of my pride,
And lay mine anger too aside,
Inch me, and cut me as small as flies,
Send me over the sea to make mince pies,
Mince pies hot, mince pies cold,
St. George.—Here comes from post, Old Bold Ben,
Fool.—Why, master, did ever I take you to be my
friend?
Since my head is made of iron,
My body's made of steel.
My hands and feet of knuckle bone,
I challenge thee to field.—They fight and Hector is
wounded.
I am a valiant knight, and Hector is my name,
Many bloody battles have I fought, and always was
the same,
But from St. George I received this bloody wound
(a trumpet sounds),
Hark! hark! I hear the silver trumpet sound,
Down yonder is the way (pointing)
Farewell, St. George, I can no longer stay, (Exit.)

ENTER FOOL TO ST. GEORGE.

St. George.—Why, Jack, did ever I do thee harm?
Fool.—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,
Appoint your time and place, I'll meet you there,
St. George.—I'll cross the water at the hour of five,
And meet you there, Sir, if I be alive. (Exit.)
Here come I Beelzebub, and over my shoulders I
carry my club, and in my hand a dripping pan, and
I think myself a jolly old man, and if you dont be-
lieve what I say enter in Devil-doubt, and clear the
way.

R.Carr: *The Peace Egg, or Saint George's Annual Play for the Amusement of Youth*