

Friar.

Blow on, ragged knave, without any doubt, 95
Until both thine eyes start out.

[*Robin blows, and his men enter.*

Here be a sort of ragged knaves come in,
Clothed all in Kendal green,
And to thee they take their way now.

Robin Hood.

Peradventure they do so. 100

Friar.

I gave thee leave to blow at thy will,
Now give me leave to whistle my fill.

Robin Hood.

Whistle, friar, evil may thou fare,
Until both thine eyes stare.

[*The Friar whistles and his men enter.*

Friar.

Now, Cut and Bause, 105

Bring forth the clubs and staves,
And down with those ragged knaves!

[*They fight, until Robin gestures for a pause.*

Robin Hood.

How sayest thou, friar, wilt thou be my man,
To do me the best service thou can? 110
Thou shalt have both gold and fee,
And also here is a lady free,

I will give her unto thee,
And her chaplain I thee make
To serve her for my sake.

[*In the seven lines, best omitted, which conclude the fragments, the Friar accepts, bidding his men go home "and lay crabs in the fire," and expressing his delight in Robin's proposal.*]

THE OXFORDSHIRE SAINT GEORGE PLAY

[The following mummers' play was printed first in *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, vol. ii, 503 ff. (Dec. 26, 1874), by the Rev. Dr. Frederick George Lee, under the title "Oxfordshire Christmas Miracle Play." It is also printed by Manly in his *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama*, vol. i, 289. Dr. Lee wrote of it as follows: "The text of the play was taken down by myself from the lips of one of the performers in 1853. I first saw it acted in the Hall of the old Vicarage House at Thame, in the year 1839, by those whose custom it had been, from time immemorial, to perform it at the houses of the gentle-folk of that neighbourhood at Christmas, between St. Thomas's Day and Old Christmas Eve, January 5. These performers (now long scattered, and all dead but one, as I am informed) claimed to be the 'true and legitimate successors' of the mummers who, in previous centuries, constantly performed at the 'Whitsun' and 'Christmas Church Ales,' records of which are found on almost every page of the 'Stewards' and Churchwardens' Books of the Prebendal Church of our Blessed Lady of Thame.' In Mr. Lupton's *History of Thame*, some account of these performances is given; while, in the 'Address' prefixed to his privately-printed and curious tract, *Extracts from the Accounts of the Proctors and Stewards, &c.*, of that town, he refers to the exceeding popularity of the

mumming for many years. In Lord Wenham's time, i. e. 1790, the performances were annually given at Thame Park; and at the Baronial Hall of Brill, Bucks, about 1808-14, the entertainment was attended by the nobility and gentry for miles round, and is reported to have been produced on a scale of considerable magnificence. The man from whom I took down the following in my notebook had performed at Brill, in the year 1807, and his father had done the same at Thame Park in the previous century. I do not profess to be able to explain the text of the play, nor can I quite admire all its points. Its coarseness, too, is not to my taste. Least of all can I comprehend its purport. Its anachronisms will be patent to all. But at least its action is vigorous, and, when I was a boy, I confess that I thought the performance most delightful and impressive. As the late Mr. Lupton (a local antiquarian and a gentleman of excellent taste and high character) informed me of so much that is here set forth, I may add that he, at the same time, expressed his conviction that my version of the play is most probably the only one that had ever been committed to paper; for the dialogue was purely traditional, and handed down from father to son. Nothing whatsoever has been altered or added by myself. I have only ventured to put the directions in Italics in a little more concise and intelligible language than that in which they were dictated to me."

Mr. Chambers in his *Medieval Stage* devotes a chapter to the Saint George Play (vol. i, 205 ff.), listing twenty-seven printed versions on which his account is based. The play is distinctively a play, with characters playing individual parts, as distinguished from the

various sword and other dances which sometimes include dramatic features, but with few and indefinite characters, a connecting feature being that in some cases in the dances a doctor appears as in the Saint George Play. This play seems far to have surpassed other forms of mummers' play in popularity. For the general subject of folk-plays, see the volume announced by the Folk-Lore Society under the editorship of T. F. Ordish, who has already treated it in *Folk-Lore*, vol. ii, 326, vol. iv, 162.

The play consists characteristically of three parts, the "presentation," in which the persons, as they are successively announced, come forward or "enter" from the half circle in which they stand; the "drama" proper; and the "quete," or passing round a suitable receptacle for gifts of money, which terminates the performance. The serious presentation of the story of Saint George, forming the kernel of the play, has, as will be seen, long since merged in rustic burlesque and foolery, for which Dr. Lee felt it necessary to offer his quaint apology. That the story should have been turned into extravaganza was inevitable, if it was to be perpetuated at all, after its original inspiration had disappeared with the conditions of life and belief which originated and fostered it. Degenerate and intrinsically trivial as the modern versions of these plays are, they are, however, of real interest and value in illustrating the persistence of tradition, and above all as attesting the natural tendency of popular drama to turn to national tradition and history for themes for dramatic presentation.

The many versions vary widely in minor details, though alike in outline. There is great variety as regards the names of the characters, even Saint George,

who in some versions would be quite unrecognizable were it not for the parallel afforded by other versions. The version here printed seems rather more full and interesting than others. Manly prints another modern version (the "Lutterworth"), and another from Cornwall may be found in "*Everyman*" with other *Interludes* in "Everyman's Library," Appendix A.

The text here given reproduces Dr. Lee's text in *Notes and Queries*, following it in arrangement of lines, explanation of words, and other details.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING ALFRED	OLD FATHER CHRISTMAS
KING ALFRED'S QUEEN	ST. GEORGE OF ENGLAND
KING WILLIAM	THE OLD DRAGON
OLD KING COLE (WITH A WOODEN LEG)	THE MERRY ANDREW
GIANT BLUNDERBORE	OLD DOCTOR BALL
LITTLE JACK	MORRES-MEN

All the mummers come in singing, and walk round the place in a circle, and then stand on one side.

Enter King Alfred and his Queen arm-in-arm.

I am King Alfred, and this here is my Bride.

I've a crown on my pate and a sword by my side.

[Stands apart.]

Enter King Cole.

I am King Cole, and I carry my stump.

Hurrah for King Charles! down with old Noll's Rump!

[Stands apart.]

Enter King William.

I am King William of blessed me-mo-ry,

Who came and pulled down the high gallows-tree,

And brought us all peace and pros-pe-ri-ty.

[Stands apart.]

Enter Giant Blunderbore.

I am Giant Blunderbore, fee, fi, fum,
Ready to fight ye all — so I says, "Come!"

[Enter Little Jack.]

And this here is my little man Jack,
A thump on his rump and a whack on his back!

[Strikes him twice.]

I'll fight King Alfred, I'll fight King Cole,
I'm ready to fight any mortal soul;
So here I, Blunderbore, takes my stand,
With this little devil, Jack, at my right hand,
Ready to fight for mortal life. Fee, fi, fum.

[The Giant and Little Jack stand apart.]

Enter St. George.

I am St. George of Merry Eng-land,
Bring in the morres-men, bring in our band.

[Morres-men come forward and dance to a tune from fife and drum. The dance being ended, St. George continues:]

These are our tricks. Ho! men, ho!

These are our sticks, — whack men so!

[Strikes the Dragon, who roars, and comes forward.]

The Dragon speaks.

Stand on head, stand on feet!

Meat, meat, meat for to eat!

[Tries to bite King Alfred.]

I am the dragon, here are my jaws,

I am the dragon, here are my claws.

Meat, meat, meat for to eat!

Stand on my head, stand on my feet!

[Turns a summersault and stands asue.]

All sing, several times repeated.

Ho! ho! ho!

Whack men so!

[The drum and fife sound. They all fight, and after general disorder, fall down.]

Old Dr. Ball comes forward.

I am the Doctor and I cure all ills,
Only gullup my portions [*qy.* potions] and swallow
my pills;

I can cure the itch, the stitch, the pox, the palsy and
the gout,

All pains within and all pains without.

Up from the floor, Giant Blunderbore!

[Gives him a pill, and he rises at once.]

Get up, King; get up, Bride;

Get up, Fool, and stand aside.

[Gives them each a pill, and they rise.]

Get up, King Cole, and tell the gentlefolks all

There never was a doctor like Mr. Doctor Ball.

Get up, St. George, old England's knight,

[Gives him a pill.]

You have wounded the Dragon and finished the fight.

[All stand aside but the Dragon, who lies in convulsions on the floor.]

Now kill the old Dragon and poison old Nick.

At Yule-tyde, both o' ye, cut your stick!

[The doctor forces a large pill down the Dragon's throat, who thereupon roars, and dies in convulsions.]

Then enter Father Christmas.

Father Christmas.

I am Father Christmas! hold, men, hold!

Be there loaf in your locker, and sheep in your fold,

A fire on the hearth, and good luck for your lot,
Money in your pocket, and a pudding in the pot!

He sings.

Hold, men, hold!

Put up your sticks,

End all your tricks;

Hold, men, hold!

[Chorus (all sing while one goes round with a hat for gifts).]

Hold, men, hold!

We are very cold,

Inside and outside,

We are very cold.

If you don't give us silver,

Then give us gold

From the money in your pockets —

[Some of the performers show signs of fighting again.]

Hold, men, hold!

Song and chorus.

God A'mighty bless your hearth and fold,

Shut out the wolf and keep out the cold;

You gev' [have given] us silver, keep you the gold,

For 't is money in your pocket. — Hold, men, hold!

Repeat in chorus.

God A'mighty bless, &c.

[Exeunt omnes.]