

A Chedworth Mummers Play

Collected by James Madison Carpenter circa 1930

From Library of Congress

Source Robert Lawrence, Laurel Cottage, Chedworth (see photograph)

Introduction

James Madison Carpenter (1888 – 1983) was an American Methodist preacher who was very interested in English and American folklore. He travelled extensively and, as well as transcribing the songs that he heard, he also used a Dictaphone.

This important collection is now in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

This is his record of meeting Robert Lawrence of Laurel Cottage:



Learned 60 years ago from old mummers and older brothers Cornelius and Lambert Lawrence

Last acted 50 years before (circa 1880).

Jackets - completely covered with slips of all colors of rags and papers -- could not see garment -- peaked hats, trimmed with hanging streamers of coloured papers -- sometimes pointed with pheasant's tail feathers -- usually wore mummers face's -- made of cardboard and painted with different colors -- some faces black, others yellow, aunt Sally wore bonnet. Jackets were brown. SMOCK FROCKS, coming down to bend of legs.

FIRST MAN: Give room give room
All you brave and gallant all,
I'll show you this activity
On this merry Christmas time.
Activity of youth, activity of age,
The finest activity that ever was shown
Upon a common stage.

Come in, Bold Robin Hood

KEEPER: I'm the keeper of this forest,
And the King put me in trust,
To look after the deer that runs here an there
So stop thee, good fellow I must.

THIRD MAN: If thee bist sich a bold fellow
An has so great command
Thee must have more provocative power,
Before thee can'st bid me to stand.

KEEPER: I have no provocative power,
Nor none I need,
For I've a staff and another old graft
An he's sure to do the deed!

(Measure staffs)

My staff's past length, oak so free,
Eight six'll knock down a calf
An uh warrant a'll knock down thee!
(They fight; one knocks the other down)

FIRST MAN: Doctor, Doctor come an see,
King George is ooded in his knee,
King George is ooded in his heart!
Doctor, doctor, don't delay,
But mount thee horse and come away!
(Doctor comes in, calling Jack Vinney)

DOCTOR: 'Old my 'oss, Jack!

JACK: Right, sir! Right be the sail!

DOCTOR: D'st know 'ow to do s' 'oss, Jack?
How I likes my oss done,
Sup't up wie woodashes an soap suds,
An rub'n down well wie a fuz faggot stick!
I'm the doctor,
I cure all ills, --
The itch the stitch, the pax the paulsey an the gout,
All pains within, all pains without!
All you little maidens that have got the mullygrubs,
The canterwurry squirts, an can't piddle without
Breakin wind behind, take one o my golden pills
An that'll work thee through, back an belly too!
I don't go about like one of these quack doctors
That'd sooner kill or cure,
I goes about for the good o' me own countrymen!
Sooner to cure nor kill!
I'n cure this poor man, or any other man
As yunt quite dyudd,
(Gives him pill)
Yure, bold fellow,
Rise up thee yud!

FIRST MAN: Walk in, Aunt Sally!

AUNT SALLY: Yure comes I as aint been 'it,
With my grt yud an little wit,
Me yud's so big, an me wit's so small,
I'll plyay thee a tune' as'll plaze thee al!

Green sleeves an yellow lace (traditional song)

Note: A similar (but not identical) version of this play was also given to Carpenter by Mr. Norman of Armstrong Cottage, Chedworth.