

*Happiness throughout  
the New Year*

# THE COUNTRY DANCER

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The Kissing Bough

WINTER  
1953 - 1954



## THE COUNTRY DANCER

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## THE KISSING BOUGH

We are indebted to "English Dance and Song" for our cover picture and for the following description:

"The evergreen 'kissing bough' was the traditional Christmas decoration (In England) before the German Christmas Tree became popular. The Symondsburys Mummers end their play with the words:

"Tie a bow of ribbon now  
On this our Christmas Holly Bough"

spoken just after the doctor has said:

"Now ladies and gentlemen,  
We've shown you the best of our pleasure  
And we wish for you to bestow upon us  
A little of your treasure".

and they are passing the hat round before going on to the next place of performance.

Nowadays the Mummers carry only a spray of holly, but it seems more likely that they once carried a 'bough' similar to the one on the cover. Whatever the tying on of ribbons may symbolize it is certainly a delightful custom, and one can picture the Mummers in times past carrying home a brightly decorated bough, well fed, well toasted, and we hope well rewarded with 'treasure'".

## "A little of your treasure"

Recently you will have found in your mail a suggestion that you count the C.D.S. among those to whom you send a Christmas or New Year Gift. Like the doctor in the Mummers' Play "we wish to bestow upon us a little of your treasure" feeling that the Society by spreading knowledge of its dances and songs has indeed "shown you the best of its pleasure". Then we can most heartily say with the Mummers -

"Well done old Father Christmas  
And that's the best of all  
We wish you a 'Merry Christmas'  
And God bless 'ee all'".

## PRESENTATION

The following letter is addressed to those who shared in the presentation made to Mrs. Max Sellers (Peggy Stanley-Brown) on the occasion of her retirement from the national Executive Committee:

Dear Country Dancers,

I want to thank you all again for the lovely Party you gave me. I was very touched by your generous thought of me and the airplane luggage has been put to good use on our trip to Iowa. I am looking forward to using the tea set when we get back to Connecticut. As I look back over the twenty-seven years in which I have been associated with the C.D.S. I think that the spirit of friendliness is one of the outstanding things that Country dancing fosters. You simply cannot bear grudges and dance at the same time.

All through the middle west we have seen posters announcing square dances in the small towns and dancing is scheduled on the Adult Recreation programs. We haven't had a chance to attend any dances but I know there is great interest in them. We have had a very good holiday and the trip out through the cornfields of Indiana and Iowa was fascinating. We will be back in Connecticut the end of the month and will hope to see any of you who come along the Housatonic River.

Again my thanks and all good wishes for a fine winter of dancing.

Peggy S-B Sellers



## MUMMERS' PLAYS



A PARTY OF MUMMERS.

That the practice of "mumming" still exists in England is well demonstrated by the film made recently in Dorsetshire. In other counties also there are families where the tradition survives - Cheshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Gloucester, Oxfordshire, Sussex, Yorkshire and elsewhere. Commonly the play is enacted between Christmas and Twelfth Night, but occasionally it takes place at Easter or Hallowe'en. A pamphlet issued by the English Folk Dance and Song Society sums up the general form and purpose of these folk plays as follows:

"The Mummers' Play or 'Folk-Play' is not, itself, a peculiarly English thing - it springs up like grass in all the older countries of the world where there are aboriginal people who have seen the days shorten, the nights lengthen, and heat give place to cold in winter; who have seen the return of life and light in summer, whose hope of immortality for themselves has become

symbolized in a contest, or a victory of beneficent life-giving forces over malignant powers of winter, sterility and death. Wherever it appears, whether in Greece or Mexico, in Finland or Spain, or the Pacific Islands, Africa, Asia, or England 'the play' contains this symbol of contest and victory expressed in terms familiar to the people of the place, or significant in the story of their country. In England the 'good' and the 'beautiful' and eventually victorious figure is usually called St. George, and his opponent, The Turkish Knight, or Black Prince of Morocco, recalling the days when Turkey, Arabia and the North African shore of the Mediterranean were the countries of the Infidel, and enemies of Christianity. Sometimes he is the Soldan of Egypt, sometimes just Bold Slasher - but by whatever name he goes he is the enemy, the Dragon, the evil one, the force which temporarily gains an advantage, and then is finally vanquished.

"The other essential character is the Doctor, Priest or Medecine-man who by his arts restores the fallen hero to life and ensures his victory. Various other characters add themselves, carrying some insignia of fertility or life, crude and unabashed in some countries, mild in England, where the custom and decorum of centuries has prevailed. The doctor may have a horse, and a man - a comic, rude fellow - to hold the horse and fetch the bag of cures; an old woman (a man dressed as such) who laments the fallen hero; Little Johnny (a hump-backed) Jack with his family on his back; Beelzebub, a giant carrying male and female symbols of fertility and Little Devil Du-out who sweeps or clears the way for the players with his broom. Often the mummery is 'presented' by a leader, frequently but not always, in England called Father Christmas - who like the Prologue and Epilogue in a Shakespearean play asks the audience to receive the actors, and courteously takes leave when the performance is over. Before everyone withdraws a 'quete' or collection is taken. This is an essential part of the ceremony, for by it the contributors secure 'luck' or benefit, and the players are enabled to complete the rite - for that is what the performance is - a rite recalling the conquest of death by life - with the feast which is its proper conclusion.

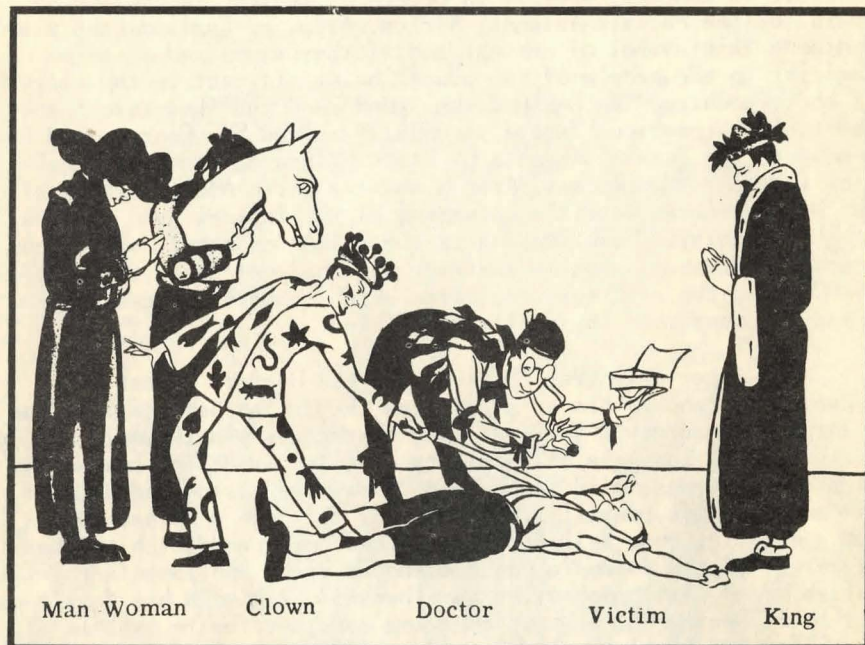
"From place to place the manner of performance varies, the comic business is less, or more crude, the names and allusions are different - but the essentials are the same: the fight takes place, the dead man is restored to life - the audience buys the luck, and the players feast."

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The picture of Mummers appearing at a house to give their play is taken from Chambers "Book of Days", published in 1866.



## SWORD DANCE PLAYS



AMPLEFORTH FOLK PLAY

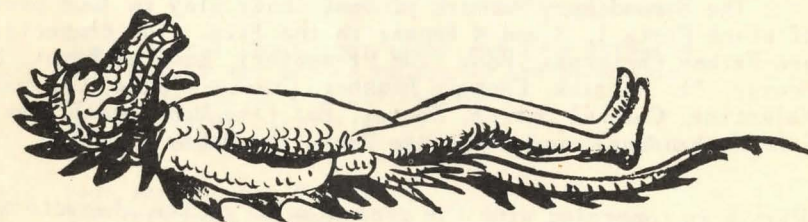
Sketch by Captain W.R.W. Kettlewell

## SWORD DANCE PLAYS

"In a few rare examples, of what is probably a much older purer type, unencumbered by later historical associations (as is the case in the St. George Mummers' Play), the contest between persons whose significance is understood rather than obviously defined, displays more clearly the fundamental or mystical conception inherent in the play - the belief in immortality contained in the identity of a father with his son.

The two great English examples, intimately associated with the Sword dance are those of Ampleforth in Yorkshire where the dance and the play survived together, and Revesby in Lincolnshire where a literary text survived performance. In both the Fool is the central figure - the father of sons whose rival he is in love, or whose inheritance he withholds. The plays vary considerably in action, though each includes a 'ritual murder' whereby the sons, at the conclusion of the dance destroy their father or a stranger who stands substitute for him.

At Ampleforth there appears the familiar figure of the Doctor, his horse and the man-woman; but it is the Fool who brings back his substitute to life, and, rejuvenated, carries off the ambiguous female he and his eldest son have both courted - as he does at Revesby; but at Revesby it is the Fool who is killed - who dies 'with my face to the light for all of you' and who brings himself to life without other agency. Alive again, he grows young while his son grows old - it is by far the most impressive and the most illuminating English example of this universal death and resurrection drama." (E.F.D.S.S. Pamphlet)



## COUNTRY OR CONTRA?

A collection of longways dances has been sent to us by Eleanor Boyle who tells us that they were found in the house of a branch of the Merrill family in Maine. The dances are handwritten and are clearly someone's notebook, made to remind himself of the figures of the dances popular in his day. Mrs. Boyle asks if these would be English country dances brought here from overseas - and some seem to be very close to the 18th Century Apted collection - or if they belong to the New England Contra development. We print two examples below. Unfortunately the maker of the notebook gives no information about the tunes used. Perhaps some of our readers will have suggestions:

### THE ENCHANTED WOOD

Cast off and hands four round at bottom  
Cast up and hands four round at top  
Lead down the middle and up again and cast off  
Hands six quite round.

### JOCKEY OF THE GREEN

Change sides and back again  
Right hands across half way round and back again  
Lead down the middle, up again and cast off  
Hands six.



## WALK IN, ST. GEORGE

The Country Dance Society has acquired a copy of the film of this traditional play given by the Mummers of Symondsbury in Dorsetshire, England. It was made under the auspices of the English Folk Dance and Song Society and is authentic in every detail except the time of year. For purposes of photography, the play was presented in the Spring and out of doors, instead of indoors in the Winter.

The Symondsbury Mummers present their play in four parts, of which Parts 1, 3 and 4 appear in the film. The characters are Father Christmas, Room (the Presenter), King of Egypt, St. George, St. Patrick, Captain Bluster, Gracious King, General Valentine, Colonel Spring, Doctor, Bet (the Man-Woman), Jan (the Husbandman), and Tommy the Pony (the Hobby Horse).

Part 1 is concerned with the presentation of the characters, St. George's battle with the four warriors, and their restoration to life by the doctor. Part 3 is a scene in which the Hobby Horse is killed and restored to life and demonstrates his magic powers. Part 4 is called "The Singing of the Travels". The Warriors form a circle round Jan and march around singing their song, with Jan replying to each verse. The song is the traditional one of the Husbandman and the Servingman in which the Chorus sets forth the delights of the life of a Servingman while Jan replies with the advantages of the life of a Husbandman.

The Symondsbury tune for this dialogue is so infectious that all Pinewoods was humming it last summer after seeing the film. For the benefit of those who could not understand the Dorsetshire accent we give the words below:

Chorus (sing) We're to meet my brothers dear  
All on the highway  
And so solemn I was walking along  
So pray come tell to me  
What calling yours may be  
And I'll have you for some serving-man.

Jan (spoken) For all thy intelligence I give thee many thanks  
Ay, and I'll quit thee so soon as I can  
But vain do I know whether you can do so  
To show the pleasure of a servant-man.

Chorus (sing) Some servant-man of pleasure  
Do make pastime out of leisure  
For to see the horse trip over the plain  
With our horses and our hounds  
We'll make hills and valleys sound  
That's a pleasure for some servant-man.

Jan (spoken) My pleasure is more than that  
It's to see my oxen grow fat  
And prove well in their kind  
Ay, and a good stack of corn to fill up my barn  
That's the pleasure of the old husbandman.

Chorus (sing) When next to church they will go  
With their livery fine and gay  
With their cocked-up hats and gold lace all around  
With our shirts as white as milk  
And stitched as fine as silk  
That's a habit for some servant-man.

Jan (spoken) Don't tell I about your silks and your garments  
That be not fit for us to travel the bushes in  
Let I have on my old leather coat  
Ay, and in my purse a groat  
That is the habit of an old husbandman.

Chorus (sing) Some servant-men do eat  
The very best of meat  
Such as cock, goose, capon and swan  
But when lords and ladies dine  
They drink strong beer, ale and wine  
That's the diet for some servant-man.

Jan (spoken) Don't talk to I about your cocks and your capons,  
Let I have a good rusty piece of bacon  
Ay, and a good piece of pickled pork done always in  
my house  
Ay, and a good hard crust of bread-and-cheese once  
now and then  
That is the diet for a wold husbandman.

Chorus (sing) For we must needs confess  
That your calling is the best  
And we'll give you the uppermost hand  
So now we won't delay  
But pray both night and day  
To God bless the honest husbandman.

## WALK IN, ST. GEORGE

The Symondsbury Mumming Play, under the above title, can be rented from the Country Dance Society of America, for a fee of \$10 plus mailing charges. The film is 16 mm. color-sound and runs for about 30 minutes.



## CENTER NEWS

**DENVER, COLO.** The Sherwood Folk Dance Club participated in the Folklore Conference held at Denver University, and danced English country and Morris dances. They also danced during the summer program sponsored by the City Recreation department.

The Sherwood Club has just completed Morris accessories for a team of six, and also have the bells for a set of six girls. The colors used are forest green and autumn red, which are the Club's colors, following Cecil Sharp's information on Morris costumes and also the picture of the Morris men that appeared on the English magazine "Coming Events in Britain" as a guide for completing the outfits. These baldricks and bells are the property of the Club, as are the sticks and swords used in Morris and sword dances.

**LEXINGTON, KY.** Dance activities for the Lexington Center started with the resumption of the University's schedule. Every Tuesday evening there is general folk dancing for all, under the leadership of Dr. M. G. Karsner, Mr. and Mrs. Pat Napier, Mr. Jack Todd, Mrs. Anne Wright and others...every other Wednesday evening is for experienced dancers...every Thursday evening for a couples' group, with general folk dancing. Tuesdays and Thursdays are open to beginners, and all dances are taught. The Center also holds a Workshop every Fall to train leaders. And next April, the Center will again cooperate with the University of Kentucky and a state-wide committee in sponsoring the Kentucky Folk Festival. A Workshop to teach the Festival dances was held in October.

Members of the Center have elected the following officers for 1953-1954: chairman, Mrs. Dee Amyx; vice-chairman, Mr. Howard Evans; treasurer, Miss Happy West; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Claude Snyder; recording secretary, Miss Rosemary Fox.

**POTSDAM, N.Y.** We still meet every second week on Saturday night. We were hosts to the Frontier Dancers Association in April. Several clubs were represented, and each club was responsible for a part of the program. On June 6th we entertained the Westmoret Y.M.C.A. from Montreal and a group from Hull, Quebec, and Ottawa, Canada, as well as the Massena, N.Y., Belles & Beaux. On July 6th Mr. and Mrs. Bill Jennack from Farmingdale, L.I., were in Potsdam, and they called at one of our meetings. On July 11th we all met at Mr. and Mrs. Howard M. Smith's for a picnic supper on the lawn, with a dance afterward. And on

October 2nd about twenty-four of our members went to Perth, Ontario, to visit a square and folk dance group there.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith made a six-weeks trip through the South and West this Spring and brought back many new dances. I went to Pinewoods in August and also brought back new material. Another member, Neil Cayey, attended a folk dance camp near Buffalo over Labor Day weekend. So we really have many new dances to work on this Winter.

Although we always enjoy the new dances and I know that they create interest in our club, we still do the authentic folk dances of our north country and some European folk dances. One of our favorites is the Lancers.--Margaret Richards.

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## DANCING IN THE H. Q. AREA

The Headquarters Area of the C.D.S. draws dancers from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania for both classes and parties. And the new season was off to an enthusiastic start with an Open Party held shortly before Elsie Whiteman and Kathleen Bliss returned to England after their visit here as members of the 1953 Pinewoods staff.

Regular classes began the first Wednesday in October. A full program is being offered with separate classes for more experienced Morris dancers, elementary Morris, advanced English country and then a two-hour session each week in English country, American contra and square dancing for all with special teaching for beginners during the first half hour.

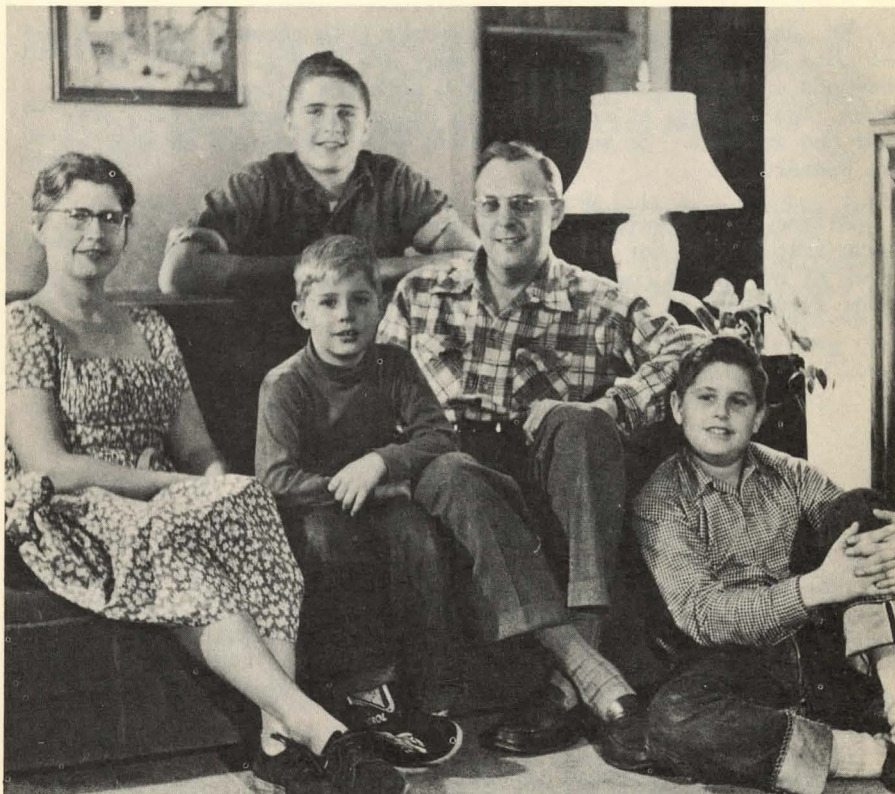
Square and Contra Dance Evenings are held the first and third Saturdays each month; a Country Dance Party, mainly English dances, on the second Saturdays. Special events for C.D.S. members are announced from time to time.

The Christmas Ball was held December 12th at Hunter College and was a great success in spite of very bad weather.

If you are in New York on a visit or business trip this Winter, on a Wednesday or Saturday, do come! You will be very welcome, and a telephone call to our New York office will bring you full information as to how to get there, and what time.



## OUR C.D.S. FAMILIES



**The Hider family**

Above we feature one of our most famous C.D.S. families. Each summer at Pinewoods we find BOB and KATHLEEN HIDER and their three boys, BOBBY, JACKY and RICKY. In fact they have never missed a summer - and Bob and Kathleen were there before they were married. C.D.S. takes a lot of credit for having brought together such a perfectly matched couple. They are both beautiful dancers. All who have danced morris and sword dances with Bob know the reality and forcefulness of his presentation of these masculine forms of the English dance. Some years ago Bob became interested also in American square dance calling and now calls regularly in New Jersey and in the New York area. He would be glad to see you at his monthly Saturdays with the Essex County Square Dancers.

Perhaps the wonderful swimming at Pinewoods is the chief attraction for the boys, but each year they get more and more

interested in the dancing, and have a real feeling for the music. The whole family is a real part of the C.D.S. and we are very proud of them.

Each year at Pinewoods the Hiders and the Sheinwolds celebrate their wedding anniversaries by holding a combined Party for the whole camp. Some of the grateful recipients of this hospitality responded this year with small gifts and poems. This was the one that went to Kathleen and Rob (author Ray Meltzer):

Fancy tea without the crumpets  
Imagine C# without the mob  
Yet it's worse to try to think  
Of having Morris without Rob.

Fancy cream without bananas  
Imagine ump without the teen  
Yet it's worse to try to think  
Of Rob without his girl, Kathleen.

Here's a something from us campers  
For the nineteen years of Hiders  
Champion Pinewoods CDS'ers  
Champion marital abiders.



## WEDDINGS

KUDRNA - ZIMMERMAN: September 8, 1953, at Bryn Mawr, Penna., Carol Kudrna to George Zimmerman.

CERNICH-PIPER: Zora Cernich and Ralph A. Piper, who will make their home at 132 Orlin Avenue, S.E., Minneapolis, Minn.

THOMAS-GOLDSMITH: Gladys Thomas and Stuart Goldsmith, at Ithaca, N.Y.

## BIRTHS

PINARD - Dottie and Roger Pinard announce the arrival of a daughter - Pamela Jean - July 18, 1953.

BARRON - Marshall and Frank Barron announce the arrival of a daughter - Phoebe Marshall - August 18, 1953.

BEST - Dick and Beth Best announce the arrival of a son - Gerald Whitney - October 30, 1953.



## BOOK REVIEW

**THE BURL IVES SONG BOOK.** American Song in Historical Perspective. Song versions and text by Burl Ives. Arranged for the piano by Albert Hague. Illustrations by Lamartine Le Goullon and Robert J. Lee. 276 pp. New York, Ballantine Books. Cloth \$5; paper 50 cents.

There's no doubt this book is worth owning. For 50 cents you can get the paper-bound edition to carry in your pocket, and for \$5 a bound copy, with more pages and color illustrations, which may stay open better on the piano rack. (The wider-than-high format of Leslie Woodgate's Penguin Song Book, which falls open loosely, has the advantage here over a tight, glued Ballantine Book.) It's not the arrangements, though, that make this book noteworthy; rather the selection of songs and the historical background provided. One hundred and fifteen songs packed in such small compass is something of a feat; they range from "Tobacco's But an Indian Weed" to "The Utah Iron Horse" and "The Cowboy's Lament." The grouping mainly by period--for example colonial, revolutionary, frontier--allows Mr. Ives to talk informatively at the beginning of each section about origins, characteristics, and reasons for selection. Where Cecil Sharp or John Jacob Niles has handled a song superlatively--as with "Lord Randall" or "Pretty Polly"--the Ives version has less appeal: one wonders why, with so many variants of "Barbara Allen" in 5-time to choose from, he should have selected one in 6/8. But "The Devil's Nine Questions" and "Paper of Pins" are delightful versions; "Lolly Too Dum" and "Skip to My Lou" are jolly samples of the group titled "Folk Ballads, Dances, and Songs;" and the version of "The Blue Tail Fly" testifies to those qualities in the minstrel-composer Dan Emmett that have made his songs so dear to us "folk." "The World Turned Upside Down" gains flavor from one's realizing that the British sang it when Cornwallis was defeated at Yorktown; and neat words about the same gentleman were also put to "Pop Goes the Weasel": "Cornwallis led a country dance . . . much retrograde and much advance." I suppose it is Miss Bailey's gaily vanishing ghost, as much as anything, which has already sent me out to buy three copies of the book; that isn't in just any collection.

ROBERTA YERKES

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**FOLK DANCE GUIDE** Fourth annual edition, 1954, is now off the press. Contents consist of an introduction, a short treatise on folk dancing, a national directory of instruction groups from California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, New York, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin. Also, a selected bibliography of textbooks, current periodicals and special articles. Editor is PAUL SCHWARTZ. The book sells for 50¢.

Have you read the latest book on Folklore from England?

**INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH FOLKLORE** by Violet Alford - \$2.75

Chapter headings are:

- I. What Folklore is
- II. The Calendar
- III. Village Seasonal Life
  - Part 1: Winter Feasts to Midsummer
  - Part 2: Midsummer to Christmas
- IV. Our Dances and Drama
  1. The Sword Dance
  2. The Play
  3. The other Play
  4. The Morris Dance
  5. Our Country Dances
- V. Our Songs and their Folklore
- VI. Our Tales
- VII. A Page of Magic

The book has nineteen illustrations, including the Plough Play Mummers, and Snap, the Norwich Processional Dragon. (Below)

