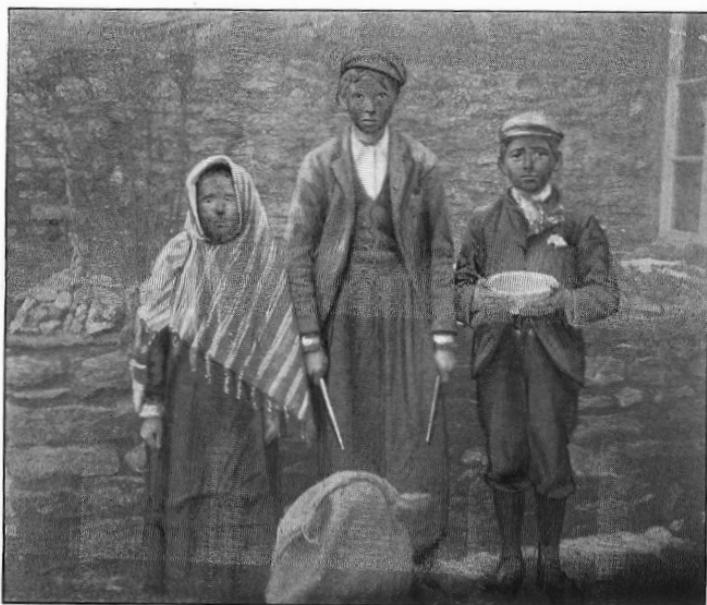




GUISERS AT CASTLETON (1).



GUISERS AT CASTLETON (2).

The man that stuck the tupsie
 Was up to the knees in blood;
 The man that held the basin
 Was washed away in the flood.
 Say laylum, etc.

And all the women in Derby
 Came begging for his ears,
 To make them leather aprons
 To last for forty years.
 Say laylum, etc.

And all the men in Derby
 Came begging for his eyes,
 To kick about in Derby,
 And take them by surprise.
 Say laylum, etc.

As the singing goes on the butcher pretends to stick the tup, and the old man with the bowl or basin pretends to catch his blood. When the performance is ended they ask for a copper or two, and then they sing "Christians, Awake."¹

In 1867 Mr. Jewitt printed a version of "The Derby Ram." It begins:—

As I was going to Derby, sir,
 All on a market day,
 I met the finest ram, sir,
 That ever was fed on hay.

The long version printed by Mr. Jewitt tells us that the butcher who killed the ram was drowned in the blood, and that the boy who "held the pail" was carried away in the flood. The maids in Derby begged for his horns; the boys begged for his eyes. As regards the skin we are told that:—

The tanner that tanned his hide, sir,
 Would never be poor any more,
 For when he had tanned and retched it,
 It covered all Sinfin Moor.

¹ Related to me by Jack Potter, of Castleton, one of the mummers, in 1901.



OLD TUP AT HANDSWORTH.

His jaws "were sold to a Methodist parson for a pulpit to preach in." In a note Jewitt tells us that another version of the ballad ends with the lines:—

And if you go to Derby, sir,
You may eat a bit of the pie.¹

We may compare the Castleton version with one or two others. At Handsworth Woodhouse (in Yorkshire), near Sheffield, a real sheep's head is put on the top of the sack, and the boy inside the sack walks on his hands and legs so as to look like a sheep. The butcher pretends to kill the tup, and his servant holds a basin to catch the blood, as at Castleton. Here six boys go round performing the old tup. They are:—

- (1) The old tup.
- (2) A butcher.
- (3) A boy carrying a basin.
- (4) A boy called "Little Devil Dout," carrying a broom.
- (5) A clown.
- (6) A collector.

They sing the same air as at Castleton, and the following lines:—

As I was going to Derby
Upon a market day,
I met the finest topsie
That ever was fed on hay.
Yea, lads, yea, lads,
Jollyfull lay, lay, lay.

After the boys have sung what they remember of the ballad, the one with the broom sweeps the ground, and says:—

Here's little Devil Dout, to sweep you all out;
Money I want, and money I'll have;
If you don't give us money to feed the old tup,
He will no longer be able to stand up.

After this the collector goes round with a hat collecting money.

¹ *Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire*, 1867.

At Handsworth (in Yorkshire), near Sheffield, the boys have an imitation of a sheep's head. It is made of wood with a pair of real sheep's horns, with two glass marbles for the eyes. The tongue is a piece of red flannel. The boy who is acting the old tup gets under a sack, and holds the sheep's head up with a broom handle, as shewn in the photograph. Here five boys go round. They begin about seven o'clock on Christmas Eve, and finish their rounds on the night of New Year's Day. The four boys represent:—

- (1) An old woman with bonnet, frock, apron, and blackened face.
- (2) A butcher with his smock and apron, and his knife and steel. On his apron are a few spots of blood. The old woman and the butcher go arm in arm to the door of a house and say:—

“ Here comes me and our owd lass,
Short o' money and short o' brass;
Pay for a pint and let us sup,
And then we'll act our merry old tup.”

- (3) The old tup.
- (4) A fool with his face blackened.

When the butcher kills the tup it falls to the ground, as if it were dead, but they have no basin to catch the blood. They sing the following lines:—

As I was going to Derby
Upon the market day,
I met the finest tupsie
That ever was fed with hay.
Failey, failey,
Laddy, fallairy lay.

The butcher that killed the tupsie
Was up to the eyes in blood;
The boy that held the pail, sir,
Was carried away with the flood.
Failey, etc.

The blood that ran down Derby street
And over Derby Moor,
It made the biggest water-wheel
That ever was seen before.
Failey, etc.

The horns that grew on this tup's head
They were so mighty high,
That every footstep he let down
They rattled against the sky.
Failey, etc.

The wool that grew on this tup's back
It was so mighty high,
That the eagles built their nests in it,
For I heard the young ones cry.
Failey, etc.

I am told that something was formerly sung about the tup's horns being as long as the church steeple. The boys at Handsworth have not a sheep's head, but a sack, with a pair of sheep's horns sticking out at the top.

At Uppertorpe, near Sheffield, boys go round on Christmas Eve with "the old tup." They tie the ends of a sack to represent horns, as they do at Castleton. The custom is dying out, and at Norton a sufficient number of boys could not be got together at Christmas, 1901, when I made enquiry. Both "the old tup" and "the old horse" were performed at Norton and Dronfield when I was a boy, about 1855. I have remembered the tunes since boyhood, having frequently heard them sung.

The butcher of modern life who kills a sheep now puts it on a stretcher, and stabs it in the throat with his knife, a boy holding a bucket or pail under the wound to catch the blood.

The ceremony which has just been described represents the sacrifice of a ram, for it is inconceivable that just as the old year was passing into the new the men or boys of numerous villages should pretend to kill a ram as a mere freak. Possibly a ram's body was once distributed amongst the people,

for the several versions of the accompanying ballad represent them as begging for various parts of the body. In describing the "Tup o' Derby," in 1895, Mr. Arthur Mayall says that "the ram's horns were often gilded."¹ This is an important fact, because amongst the Greeks and Romans the horns of a victim, if an ox, might be gilded.²

We must not forget that "in England, in the seventh, and as late as the thirteenth century, the year was reckoned from Christmas Day."

That the ceremony of "the old tup" was intended to confer a benefit on the people may be inferred from the practice of sweeping the house, which, as we have seen, forms part of the guising at Handsworth Woodhouse. It is well known to anthropologists that this sweeping was intended to expel evil from the house. At Eyam, in Derbyshire, women sweep their door steps on the first of March, and they say that unless you do this you will have fleas all the year. In the East Riding of Yorkshire women sweep the dust up "for luck." At Lane-shaw Bridge, near Colne, in Lancashire, they sweep the old year out and the new year in. Men, women, and children go round on New Year's Eve, from house to house, and they do this from ten o'clock p.m. to midnight. They consider that they have a right to enter any house if they find the door unfastened. They are disguised, and they wear a motley dress, and either their faces are blackened or they wear masks. They never speak or sing, but go straight to the room where the family are, and begin to dust the room and sweep the hearth. They sweep the dust into the fire-place. For this purpose they bring brushes and dusters with them. They do all this in silence, and when they have finished, they rattle a money-box before each person, and collect what money they can get. If they find a door closed against them they make "a mumming sound" to induce the people inside to open it.⁴

¹ *Notes and Queries*, 9th S., ii., 511.

² Smith's *Dict. of Greek and Roman Antig.*, 1891, vol. ii., 584, 586.

³ Sir Harris Nicholas's *Chronology of History*, p. 41.

⁴ Reported to me by Amy Wroe, aged 24, who till lately resided at Laneshaw Bridge, and has often seen the ceremony performed.

I am told that in some parts of Lincolnshire young people disguise themselves and sweep the houses out on Christmas Eve.

The "little Devil Dout" at Handsworth was the man who, in popular belief, swept devils out of the house. The word "dout," as will be seen in dictionaries, is a contraction of "do out," meaning to put out, just as "don" is to "do on," or put on. We might then call him "little Devil Put-out." The periodical expulsion of evils and devils by sweeping the house out has been fully discussed elsewhere, but without reference to England.¹

II.—THE OLD HORSE.

At various places in North Derbyshire, such as Norton, Eckington, and Dronfield, a number of men used to go round with "the old horse" on Christmas Eve. The body of the man who represented the horse was covered with cloth or tarpaulin, and the horse's head was made of wood, the mouth being opened by strings in the inside. When the men reached the door of a house, the man representing the horse got under the tarpaulin, and they began to sing:—



It is a poor old horse, And he's knocking at your
 door, And if you'll please to let him in, He'll
 please you all I'm sure. Poor old horse, Poor old horse.

¹ In Frazer's *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed. On Garland Day at Castleton a man with a besom formerly went before the May King "to clean the way" (see my article on "Garland Day at Castleton" in *Folk-lore*, vol. xii., p. 410).

He once was a young horse,
 And in his youthful prime
 My master used to ride on him,
 And thought him very fine.
 And now that he's grown old,
 And nature doth decay,
 My master frowns upon him,
 And these words I've heard him say—
 Poor old, etc.

His feeding it was once
 Of the best of corn and hay,
 That grew down in yon fields,
 Or in the meadows gay.
 Poor old, etc.

But now that he's grown old,
 And scarcely can he crawl,
 He's forced to eat the coarsest grass
 That grows against the wall.
 Poor old, etc.

He's old and he's cold,
 And is both dull and slow;
 He's eaten all my hay,
 And he's spoiled all my straw.
 Poor old, etc.

Nor either is he fit to ride,
 Or draw with any team;
 So take him and whip him,
 He'll now my master's . . .
 Poor old, etc.

To the huntsman he shall go,
 Both his old hide and *foe* (*sic*),
 Likewise his tender carcase
 The hounds will not refuse.
 Poor old, etc.

His body that so swiftly
 Has travelled many miles,
 Over hedges, over ditches,
 Over five-barred gates and stiles.
 Poor old, etc.

Then follows a prose conversation amongst the mummers, which is not worth preserving, because it has been so modernised as to have lost all its interest. The end of it is that the horse gets a new lease of life, and attempts to worry a blacksmith, who is called upon to shoe him. The play is ended by the following stanza:—

The man that shod this horse, sir,
 That was no use at all,
 He likened to worry the blacksmith,
 His hammer and nails and all.
 Poor old, etc.

I have been told by an old man in Eckington, now dead, and by another man in Sheffield, that formerly the mummers used to find out where an old horse was buried, and dig its head up. I published the version of the ballad here given in 1888.¹

It will be noticed that in North Derbyshire the horse is described as "the *old* horse." "Throughout Yorkshire," says Mr. Henderson,² "the Christmas mummers carry with them an image of a *white* horse." In Lancashire "the old horse" was described as "Old Ball," and the ceremony was performed not at Christmas, but at Easter.³ It is said that "old Ball" is a favourite name for a cart-horse in Lancashire, and Dr. Murray, in *The New English Dictionary*, conjectures that *ball* means a white-faced horse. He refers to Fitzherbert's *Husbandry*, 1523, which mentions "a white rase or ball in the

¹ *Sheffield Glossary* (English Dialect Society), p. 163. I did not, however, give the air. I now regret that I did not take down the prose conversation.

² *Folk-lore of the Northern Counties*, 2nd ed., p. 70.

³ Harland and Wilkinson, *Lancashire Folk-lore*, 234.

forehead." I have never seen "an image of a white horse" in Yorkshire myself. At Little Hucklow one of the guisers came to the door and said, "Please will you see Ball?"¹

It seems as if the old horse, or white horse, were intended to personify the aged and dying year. The year, like a worn-out horse, has become old and decrepit, and just as it ends the old horse dies. But he rises again with the new year. The time at which the ceremony is performed, and its repetition from one house to another, indicate that it was a piece of magic intended to bring welfare to the people in the coming year.

"The savage," says Mr. Frazer, "infers that he can produce any desired effect by merely imitating it."² Ancient races, who were ignorant of natural laws, and who could not be sure that the setting sun would ever rise again, could not be certain that a new year would follow the old year.

The folk-lore of this neighbourhood has a good deal to say about white horses, and they were supposed to bring luck. Thus, "if you see a white horse, spit on your little finger, and you will be lucky all day."³ In the same way a representation of a white horse, when used for the purposes of magic or witchcraft, might be regarded as bringing luck to the new year. It is reasonable to conjecture that the figures of horses made by laying bare the chalk on the Berkshire hills, as in the Vale of the White Horse, were magical devices for attracting the sun. If the sun is dazzling white or bright (Lat. *candidus*), and if his chariot is drawn by white horses, then if you pretend that a white horse dies, and rises again just as the old year is passing into the new, you effect, by a magical act, the continuance of sunlight in the new year. Such, we may conjecture, was the barbarous reasoning which induced men to perform this ceremonial.

The ancient Germans maintained white horses (*candidi equi*)

¹ As regards the performance at Easter, we must remember that in the twelfth century the Anglican Church began the year on the 25th of March.

² *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., vol. i., p. 9.

³ Addy's *Household Tales, Etc.*, p. 102.

in sacred groves, and they were employed in no earthly labour.¹ They were therefore regarded as peculiarly sacred.

That ceremonies like "the old tup" or "the old horse" were of a magical nature may be inferred from the fact that they were sternly prohibited by Christian law-givers and moralists. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his *Penitential*, forbade the practice of going about at Christmas dressed up like a young stag or an old woman, clad in the skins of animals, or wearing beasts' heads, and he declared that those who changed themselves into the forms of animals were to do penance for three years, because the thing was devilish.²

Such heathenish practices were not confined to England, and in the fourth century we find St. Augustine denouncing them in a sermon.

"If," he says, "you still observe that people perform that very foul disgrace of the young hind or stag, chastise them so severely that they may repent of having done the impious act."³ In the life of St. Eligius we have this prohibition: "Let nobody on the kalends of January make abominable and ridiculous things—old women, or young stags, or games." Again, these practices were forbidden by the Council of Auxerre, which declared that "it is unlawful on the kalends of January to perform with an old woman, or a young stag, or to observe devilish handsels."

It will be noticed that a ram's head, and not a stag's head, is used in North Derbyshire, possibly because stags' horns

¹ Tacitus, *Germania*, 9, 10. See more on this subject in Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Eng. trans.), p. 658, *seqq.*

² "Si quis in kalendas Januarii in cervulo aut vetula vadit, id est in ferarum habitus se communicant, et vestiuntur pellibus pecudum, et assumunt capita bestiarum; qui vero taliter in ferinas species se transformant, iii. annos pœniteant; quia hoc dæmonicum est."—Thorpe's *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, ii. 34.

³ "Si adhuc agnoscatis aliquos illam sordidissimam turpitudinem de hinnula vel cervula exercere, ita durissime castigatæ, ut eos pœniteat rem sacrilegam commisisse."—*Serm. de Tempore*, 215.

⁴ "Nullus in kalend. Januarii nefanda et ridiculosa, vetulas, aut cervulos, aut jotticos faciant."—*Vita S. Eligii*, lib. 2., cap. 4.

⁵ "Non licet kalendis Januarii vetula aut cervulo facere, vel strenas diabolicas observare, etc."—*Concil. Antissiod. can. 2*. All these passages are quoted from the last edition of *Du Cange*.

are not always easy to procure. According to Plot's *Staffordshire* reindeer heads were worn at Abbot's Bromley, in Staffordshire, at the Christmas hobby-horse dance.

The blackened faces, or masks, are significant, because adepts in magic wore masks.¹ The old woman seems originally to have been a sibyl, or witch, and the Old English *hægtesse*, a witch, is related to our modern *hag*. The *strenæ*, gifts, or handsels,² forbidden by the Council of Auxerre, correspond in some way to the presents of money given to the guisers.

Guising was known amongst the old Norsemen as skin-play (*skinn-leikr*).³ This word would be represented in O.E. as *scinn-lāc*. According to Dr. Sweet, *scinn-lāc* means, amongst other things, magic trick or art. He states, however, that *scinn* or *scin* means phantom, demon, devil.⁴

The photographs were done by an amateur, and I regret that they are not better. It would be a good thing if members of the Society would publish versions, or further details, from other parts of Derbyshire.⁵ At this late hour they may not be easy to get, but one cannot believe that Castleton is the only place where guisers still go round. Much can be done by the patient questioning of old people.

¹ Grimm, *op. cit.* (English trans.), p. 1045.

² *Strena*, Anselme.—Wright-Wülcker, *Vocab.*, 613, 41.

³ See Vigfusson and Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ii. 386.

⁴ *The Student's Dict. of Anglo-Saxon*, Oxford, 1897.

⁵ Guisers certainly exist in various forms in many parts of the county. At Aston-on-Trent, about fifteen years ago, they used to go about the parish at Christmas time dressed up, and I have known them march straight into the kitchen, to the terror of the domestics, and go through a kind of mummerly.—EDITOR.