

The  
**Sussex Garland**

A COLLECTION OF  
**BALLADS SONNETS TALES ELEGIES  
SONGS EPITAPHS**

ETC.

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX  
WITH  
NOTICES HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE

BY JAMES TAYLOR



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## THE DEVIL'S DYKE.

THE following legend, founded on a popular Sussex error, from which the Devil's Dyke takes its name, was written many years ago by WILLIAM HAMPER, Esq., of Birmingham, F.R.S., and Justice of Peace for the counties of Warwick and Worcester, a native of Sussex, from the family of Hamper at West Tarring, and was circulated at the time it was written among his Sussex friends.

FIVE hundred years ago, or more,  
Or, if you please, in days of yore,  
That wicked wyght, yclept old Nick,  
Renown'd for many a wanton trick,  
With envy from the Downs beheld  
The studded churches of the weald;  
Here Poynings cruciform — and there  
Hurst, Albourne, Bolney, Newtimber, —  
Cuckfield, and more, with tow'ring crest,  
Quæ nunc prescribere longum est; —  
Oft heard the undulating chime  
Proclaim around 't was service time;  
While to the sacred House of Prayer  
Went many a pious worshipper.

“ Can I with common patience see  
These churches — and not one for me ?  
Shall I be cheated of my due  
By such a sanctimonious crew ?”  
He mutter’d twenty things beside,  
And swore that night the foaming tide,  
Led through a vast and wondrous trench,  
Should give these pious souls a drench.

Adown the west the steeds of day  
Were hasting merrily away ;  
And Night in solemn pomp came on,  
Her lamp a star, a cloud her throne ;  
The lightsome moon, she was not there,  
But deck’d the other hemisphere.

Now with a fit capacious spade,  
So large it was on purpose made,  
Old Nick began with much ado  
To cut the lofty Downs in two ;—  
At every lift his spade threw out  
A hundred waggon loads, no doubt !—  
O ! had he labour’d till the morrow,  
His envious work had wrought much sorrow ;  
The weald, with verdant beauty graced,  
Changed to a sad and wat’ry waste !

But so it chanced, a good old dame,  
Whose deed has long outlived her name,  
Waked by the cramp at midnight hour,  
Or just escaped the nightmare’s pow’r,

Rose from her humble bed ; — when, lo ! —  
She heard Nick's terrible ado ! —  
And by the starlight faintly spied  
The wicked wyght — and Dyke so wide ;  
She knew him by his mighty size,  
His tail, his horns, his saucer eyes ;  
And while, with wonderment amazed,  
At labourer and at work she gazed,  
Swift 'cross her mind a thought there flew,  
That she by stratagem might do —  
A deed which luckily should save  
Her country from a wat'ry grave !  
By his own weapons fairly beating  
The father of all lies and cheating.

Forth from a casement, in a minute,  
A sieve with flaming candle in it  
She held to view ; — and simple Nick,  
Who ne'er suspected such a trick,  
(Old rogues are fools) when first his sight  
A full-orb'd luminary bright  
Beheld — he fled — his work undone,  
Scared at the sight of a new sun,  
And mutt'ring curses that the day  
Should drive him from his work away !

Night after night, this knowing dame  
Watch'd — but again Nick never came.

Who now dare call the action evil,  
“ To hold a candle to the devil ? ”