

The Devil in Sussex

Words and Tune: Maria Cunningham

The people of Sussex have always been wise
And holy and good never given to lies
On Sundays the bells they always did ring
And the good people to church they did bring
But the noise of the bells so angered Old Nick
That somehow to stop them he tried every trick
But the people of Sussex were more than a match
For all of the whiles of crooked Old Scratch

Now to flood Sussex churches did the Devil intend
So one night the South Downs he decided to rend
With a shovel he started to dig through a hill
So the sea would rush in all the land for to fill
But a cunning woman Old Scratch did disgrace
A candle behind an old sieve she did place
Thinking it was the lines of the sun
Away from Sussex the Devil did run

But Old Nick he wasn't one to give in
So back into Sussex he came with his din
To Mayfield he went dressed as fair maid
Where the blacksmith St. Dunstan was plying his trade
But a cloven hoof showed from under his gown
And with red hot pincers St. Dunstan bore down
It anguished the Devil who off'd with a yell
To cool off his nose in Tunbridge's Well

But the Devil his lesson he still hadn't learned
Though his nose and pride were both dreadfully burnt
To an old Sussex farmer he came without strife
"I want one of your family – I'll take your wife"
But the old wife she did nag him and beat him about
And at all of his imps she did she did constantly shout
From hell he threw her back with a roar
And the Devil's been in Sussex no more