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The Hampshire Tragedy : a true story

Hannah Moore

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THE HAMPSHIRE TRAGEDY.

—♦♦♦—
A TRUE STORY.
—♦♦♦—

BY HANNAH MOORE.

Come all ye maidens and draw near,
A doleful song I sing;
A song that proves, as you shall see,
A lie's a fearful thing.

In Hampshire once there chanced to dwell
Near Me'onstoke's little town,
A farming man, who prospered well,
An honest country clown.

It was but little he possessed,
But then he was content;
He knew no want, could treat a guest,
And paid his slender rent.

By honest industry and thrift,
He saved a little store;
And, thanking God for every gift,
He made that little, more.

And now, so lofty was his state,
He hired a servant maid;
Who, learning well on him to wait,
In truth was duly paid.

One hundred pounds, a mighty sum,
He now had saved in all;
And hid it (lest some thief should come)
Safe in his kitchen wall.

At length advancing far in years,
He calmly viewed his end;
For he need never shrink with fears,
Whose maker is his friend.

Long time a prey to dire disease,
Stretched on his bed he lay;
His servant saw him ill at ease,
And nursed him night and day.

Then Satan, who, like beast of prey,
"Seeks whom he may devour,"
Did tempt this servant maid so gay,
All in an evil hour.

He led her first to see the spot
Where lay this hidden pelf;
Then bid her form the wicked plot,
To take it for herself.

He whispered in her willing ear,
"Go make it all your own;"
For since your master's death is near,
It never can be known.

At once the wicked girl obeyed,
And feared no future ill;
Oh! stupid, silly, sinful maid,
She dreamt not of a will.

But had she thought of Him, whose eye
Sees all the deeds of man;
In vain the tempter had drawn nigh,
And urged his wicked plan.

But love of gain had warped her soul,
And drawn her quite away;
To Satan thus, that tempter foul,
She fell an easy prey.

Her mater dies; but first he leaves
By will his hundred pounds;
Tells where 'twas hid for fear of thieves,
And 'twould be surely found.

Then went his friends and searched the chink,
With close and cunning eye;
'Twas gone; but nobody could think
Which way the pelf could fly.

At length the neighbors turned a thought
To this unhappy maid;
They searched her box, the thief was caught,
For there the wealth was laid.

Then, then, alas! she vowed and swore,
Appealing oft to Heaven;
That by her master long before,
This sum was freely given.

Dire curses oft, with forehead bold,
She called down on her head;
And prayed, if any lie she told,
That God would strike her dead.

She spoke, and straight the sentence passed,
A sentence strange and rare:
At once the liar breathed her last,
Heaven heard her wicked prayer.

The friends around beheld with fear
The wretched sinner fall;
Forced in God's presence to appear,
At his most awful call.

And now, let us who still are left,
Take warning, old and young;
O, let us hate the sin of theft,
And dread a lying tongue.