

ALEXANDER  
DICK



SPORES OF A HALLOWEEN,  
TWENTY YEARS AGO



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**Author:** Alexander Dick

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SPLORES  
OF A HALLOWEEN, TWENTY YEARS AGO \*\*\*

SPLORES  
OF A  
HALLOWEEN,  
TWENTY YEARS AGO:  
BY ALEXANDER DICK.

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WOODSTOCK, C. W.:  
WILLIAM WARWICK, PUBLISHER.  
1867.

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PREFACE.

The following verses were sent to compete for the prize offered in October last, by the Montreal Caledonian Society, for the "best poem on Halloween." They were not successful; and some may be ready to ask, "Why then publish them?" It may be sufficient to reply, "I choose to do so;"

“I choose to appeal from the award of the Judges to the decision of the public.” A single sentence will explain why I make such an appeal. The gentlemen appointed to act

as judges based their decision, according to their published statement, as much upon “suitability for recitation at a public festival,” as upon “literary merit.” Had this been stated in the advertisement inviting competition it would have been all right. But it is very evident that all poems which might be judged unsuitable for such recitation,

would necessarily be excluded from competition, whatever might be their “literary merits,” and the successful production could only be that which among the “suitable”

was regarded as possessing the greatest literary excellence.

It is on this ground—and not because I could be so vain as to think that my production *ought* to have received the prize, while I was altogether unacquainted with not a few others which may have been rejected on the same principle—that

I complain of the award of the Judges, and that I now appeal from that award by this publication.

A poem may be very well suited for recitation at a public festival, and possess very slight claims to any literary merit, while another indefinitely superior might not in

such circumstances be suitable for recitation at all.

With the public I now leave the decision, and shall cheerfully acquiesce in its award whether favourable or the

reverse.

A. D.

Woodstock, C. W., Jan., 1867.

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## HALLOWEEN.

This night we meet o' a' the nights,  
For fun the very wale,  
When melancholy taks its flight,  
And graning pains grow hale;  
When young anes, wi' sic antic tricks,  
And wi' their laughin' music,  
Gar auld anes tae forget their cares,  
And feel't the best o' physic.

And though wi' some we used to meet  
We canna haud this night,  
Yet we are here to show we ne'er  
Forget tho' out o' sight:—  
And o' a HALLOWEEN langsyne,  
I will to you rehearse,  
And as a canter ye may like,  
I'll gied to ye in verse.

Ae night gane bye, at gloamin' time,  
When there was muckle steer,  
Mang witch mid warlock gathered far  
To ride in high career,  
Some callants met, a merry crew,  
Yet each a decent chiel—  
Though on that night a' seem'd possessed  
O' something o' the deil.

Their runts clean through and through were bored  
And stuffed with ravelins fou,  
And like a chimley when on fire  
Each could the reek out spue:  
And thus convened they council held,

Wi' handsel whar they'd gang;  
A' being settled and now dark,  
They set off in a bang.

It was resolved that they should try,  
On Kate, their Jenny-reeker,  
And see if 'twad hae ony guid  
Upon a witch to smeeek her:  
Jock through the key-hole sent a cloud  
That reached across the house,  
While in below the door reek rushed  
Like water through a sluice.

Kate maistly chock't, wi' hostin' seized,  
Ran to the door for air,  
Wi' open mouth and gaspin' much  
O' reek she caught the mair,  
Nor could she speak but gasp for breath  
When they took to their heel,  
But black wi' rage she shook her neive  
And wished them wi' the deil.

But whether Kate had power or no  
To put them 'neath his will,  
Frae this 'twad seem they could na get  
O' mischief half their fill;  
Frae door to door they madly ran,  
Frae door to window flew,  
Whare'er a crack or hole they fand  
They in the reek did spue:

Till ilka door wide open flew  
Wi' bang against the wa',  
And some ane gaspin' shouted out  
Some threat about the law;

Some chased, mair earnest, wi' a stick;  
Auld Jinker threw his last;  
And Supplejoints wi' elwand ran  
Behind, though he ran fast:

On him they wheeled, and charging, fired,  
In turn his Jenny-reeker,  
Ane struck him on the head and bounced,  
And ane gied him a keeker;  
He turned his back and faster ran,  
'Twas now their turn to follow—  
But ere he reached his door his head  
Had mony a heich and hollow.

Nae time was lost—to Rab's they ran,  
But ere they reached the gate,  
They halted to mak sure their plan.  
And guard against ill fate—  
For weel they ken'd that Rab would watch  
His cabbages that night,  
But they resolved that them they'd hae  
Afore the morning light.

Twa slippit up and oped the yett  
And tied across a rape,  
The others creepit through the hedge  
At whar there was a gape,  
And creepin' down amang the runts  
They pued and pued their wale;  
But Rab had spied the twa and thought  
To catch them without fail.

They saw him tae, but ne'er let on  
Till he at them did grab,  
Then shouted as they lap and ran  
Weel done! weel done, our Rab!



Rab in pursuit wi' a' his might  
Fell lengthways at the yett,  
The groans he gied were as the fa',  
For Rab was heavy wecht.

But he, wi' noise and very rage,  
'Twas said, went maist dementit,  
And when he saw his cabbage smashed,  
He fell right our and fentit—  
For on his door wi' batt'ring rams  
They made a grand attack,  
And Rab within not darin' out  
Was sure he heard it crack.

Nor yet on his alane did fa'  
The brunt o' civil war;  
A score and mae its hist'ry bear  
In mony a dreadfu' scar;  
And to relate a' that befell,  
The incidents attendin',  
This night and maist another till't  
Wad scarcely hear the endin':

How Supplejoints a lesson got  
To be discrete and civil;  
And how it gied the priest a text  
On a' the fruits o' evil;  
How Grannie Wilson's rack fell down  
Wi' sic a fearfu' din,  
And owre the floor in bick'rin' race  
Ran pewter plate and spune.

How Meg wi' toothache girnin' sat  
When startled, sprang a loup  
That cured her toothache, but she fell

And coup't the water stoup;  
And how quiet Willie frae his bed—  
Wha gaed till't aye at dark—  
Put past endurance and a' shame  
Did chase them in his sark.

But here the battle grew owre hot,  
So dreadfu' the alarms,  
Now doors ahead wide open stood,  
Wharin were mustered arms;  
So what wi' those in rear that charged,  
And what wi' those in front,  
Against sic odds they ken'd 'twas rash  
To battle wi' a runt:

So they retreated to the Crafts  
And Council held o' war—  
A' laughin', talkin', crackin' jokes,  
Uninjured by a scar—  
When Robie said, come on, let's gang,  
Hugh Christie let us cage;  
Now, Hugh was crabbit and they liked  
To put him in a rage.

Wi' tiptae steps they slippit up,  
And firmly tied the door,  
Then gently tirded—Hugh cried, "Wha's there?"  
Will gied a cuddie's roar—  
Hugh in a lowe, wi' door in hand,  
Said he would them he-haw,  
When Jock like ony sheep did bae,  
And Pate like cock did crawl.

Hugh finding that his threats were vain  
For that the door was tied,

Began to swear, and kick, and pu'  
And "let me out," he cried;  
When raging like a very bear,  
And down him ran the sweat,  
They a' put out their utmost skill  
To mak him yet mair het.

Some squeak't on panes, some thump't the door,  
Some rumbled on the wa'  
Wi' muckle stanes, till Hugh was sure  
The very house wad fa';—  
Now, Tam, the laird, sat on his loom,  
When hearin' sic a racket  
He hurried out sayin' to himsel,  
Sure Hugh has now gane crackit.

But Tam was late—the stage was clear,  
Yet Hugh still raged and swore—  
Tam in gruff voice bid him be quiet—  
What ailed him at the door?  
Now this was mair than Hugh could stan'  
Frae Tam to get the wite,  
And getting vent, he burst on Tam,  
Then baith began to flyte.

Hugh wanted out—Tam wanted in:  
Each did the other blame—  
Tam cried to Hugh, he'd break the door—  
Hugh cried to Tam, gae hame;  
But how it ended I ne'er learned,  
But 'twas na then and there,  
For, Hugh and Tam, they did'na speak  
For weeks, and may be mair.

And now to Peggie's they are aff,  
Wha's gley'd and maistly blin'—

Hoot! haudawa guid folks! ne'er fear!  
They dinna mean o' sin;  
They're daft wi' fun and this they ken—  
A's game on Halloween—  
For Baillies' threats and Provosts' laws  
They dinna care a prein.

Jock gied a backie-up to Tam,  
And Jimmie he stood bye,  
When Tam should gie the chess a rap  
That he should then let fly:  
Tam gied twa raps, and Jimmie quick  
Upon the sole let clash,  
Wi' sic a noise that Peggie thought  
Had fallen out the sash.

She hurried to the door and then  
Weel blackguarded them a,  
As scoundrels, rascals and far war,  
Though ne'er a ane she saw;  
Then owre the window 'gan to grape  
And looked wi' head agee,  
But fient a hole or crack she fand  
And far less ane could see.

While graping here, and keeking there  
In search o' cracks and hole—  
For she was sure that some were broke,  
For glass was on the sole—  
Jock slippit up behind, unheard,  
And kittled quiet her lug,  
And ere she could to him turn round  
He neist gied her a hug.

In muckle rage that ane would daur  
Wi' her sic freedom tak,  
She hurried in and quick took down  
A jug beside the rack,  
And filling it wi' water het  
Frae kettle on the hob,  
She sware his fairin she'd gie him  
For sic a shameless job:

But muckle war for Peggie 'twas  
To get in sic a fike,  
Far better had she taen a stra  
And kittled a wasps' bike—  
For Nellie Brash was passing bye,  
A fish-wife for a tongue,  
And Peggie seeing something move  
On her the water flung.

But Gude preserve us! what a screigh!  
And what a dreadfu' aith!  
Than limmar, jad, far war wi' aithis  
She ca'd her in hale-claith;  
And working hersel' up to wark,  
Wi' screigh like ony fien',  
She rushed on Peggie like a hawk,  
And swore she'd straucht her een.

But Johnnie wi' a pluck that night  
Was seen gaun in his door—  
Now, a' that ken'd him, ken'd that he  
A pluck did 'maist adore;  
But maist a jaddie he did like,  
Aboon a' ye could name,  
For never man liked woman sic  
As Johnnie liked his wame:

And Geordie guessing what was up,  
Led aff his gallant corps—  
Thinking it prudent Nell and Peg  
Should settle their ain score—  
They helped him up upon the dyke  
And canny he crawled up  
The gaval cape-stanes on his knees,  
Till lum-head he did grup;

And raxing up upon his taes,  
He neist looked down the lum,  
Just then he heard a lively skirl  
And Johnnie's weel-pleased hum,  
And, thro' a pue o' steam and reek,  
He saw amid a glow  
The pan and in't a fork did pat  
As to the tune—"My Joe"!

And bending owre he aimed fair  
A stane as big 's my han',  
And drappin 't down—a blaze got up—  
He'd coupit owre the pan—  
Quick as a squirrel he dreipit down  
And owre the yard he ran,  
As quick cam Johnnie to the front  
A sair bewildered man;

And standin' out fornent the door  
He stared up at the lum,  
But fient a thing there could he see  
Like either head or bum;  
Then north he ran, then South again  
The lum to look about,  
But naething did he see or hear—  
It must hae been Auld Clout:

Anither might hae blamed some ghaist,  
But Johnnie's faith was matter,  
He never dreamed o' starin banes,  
His thoughts were something fatter—  
He now looked up, then down the street  
If he the cause could fin'—  
Jock keeking round the corner, now,  
Said to his neighbours—rin.

And aff they ran, and in an ace  
They a' were out o' sight—  
Now, Johnnie seeing naething that  
Could throw on 't ony light,  
Bethinkin' o' his pluck gaed in—  
The sight was nane to please,  
For some among the ashes lay,  
The rest was in a bleeze:

Did Johnnie, hank'rin', now sing dool?  
Our birkies naething rued;  
Nae sooner were they aff wi' him  
Than a new splore was brewed:  
Though muckle tickled at the thought  
O' Johnnie's clappit wame—  
Which might hae been as stent's a drum  
And witness o' its fame—

Yet mair, by far, they liked sic fun  
As garred the bluid weel dance;  
They liked a chase frae ane that could  
Break wi' them sic a lance:  
Now, Jimmie Adams was that ane,  
Nae daighie but guid mettle,  
And he had what did recommend—  
A wee spice o' the nettle:

That mettle they resolved that night  
To put to sairest test,  
Nor wad the faut be theirs if not  
The nettle stung its best,  
For Willie frae his pouch had taen  
And charged a muckle scout,  
And said that Jimmie he wad show  
The wonders o' a spout.

Now weel they ken'd that he wad chase  
And that tae like a gru'—  
And whom he caught he'd mak him squeel  
As e're did ony sow—  
But what had they to fear frae him?  
Each suppler than anither,  
Nor was there ane but what might be  
To Asahel a brither.

But they made ready for the race;  
Their breeks they buckled up;  
Their bonnets pued down to their lugs;  
Their jackets buttoned up;  
And aff they a' for Jimmie's set  
When coming near the house,  
They on their tiptaes slippit up  
As quiet as ony mouse.

Will by the curtain keeking in  
Saw Jimmie at his supper,  
And aye the spune gaun round the bowl,  
Syne dippin' in the butter;  
He whispered this in Tammie's lug;  
Tam oped the outer door—  
Then Willie followed close behind  
As silent as afore:



Tam cautious oped the inner door,  
It gied the slightest squeak,  
And Jimmie wondrin' what it was  
In listenin' turned his cheek—  
Just then a strone frae Willie's scout  
Shot right into the spune,  
Which was as fixed in middle way  
Between the bowl and chin:

Bang, bang, gaed inner, outer door—  
Nor Jimmie wi' a clout  
Did dicht the parritch frae his face,  
But up, and he was out:  
Now, Tam and Will did trip and fa',  
Ane north, ane south, were seen—  
Out Jimmie cam, and trippit tae,  
And fell right in between.

First down, first up, they aff like hares,  
Each takin' different airts;  
Nor there lay Jimmie lang to grane  
And haud the bluidin parts—  
But like a gru' he aff and ran  
Wi' bicker down the street—  
Na need had Tam, nor did he let  
The dirt stick to his feet.

First down ae street, then up anither,  
Then through an entry ran—  
Here Jimmie, furious, in the dark,  
Maist coupit owre a man—  
He lost some grun, but did'na wait  
If down to help him up—  
His lufe owre youky was, to stay,  
O' Tam to get a grup.

Thus Tam did lead, thus Jimmie chased,  
Maist owre half o' the town,  
But wishing Jimmie warmer wark  
Began to wear him roun'  
To Johnston's Corner as agreed,  
There he his neighbours met,  
Wha, seeing Jimmie in pursuit,  
Took owre the Kirk-yard yett:

There Jimmie followed—now was fun—  
A' round the kirk did rin,  
Like drove o' stirks wi' tails on end,  
And raging bull behin';  
Syne out amang the headstones ran,  
And there they jouked about,  
Here mony a jerk did Jimmie get  
As he ran in and out.

At last he fell—they heard him pech  
But saw nor heard na mair—  
They did'na wait to ask him if  
The part he hurt was sair;  
But owre the dyke they maistly flew,  
Syne yont the Crafts like stour,  
Whar on the grass they lay and laughed,  
And joked for maist and hour.

Till Jock said he na supper had,  
That he was now gaun hame—  
That he was as a whistle tume;  
As tume as Johnnie's wame;  
And Robie said he could na stan'  
That he was maist clean gane,  
His brawns he said gaed flappin round  
And round about the bane.

But whether Sandy gaed straucht hame  
Or no, there is some doubt,  
For on neist morn, cencerning him,  
A something leaked out;  
The outs and ins I canna tell—  
Some mystery about pouter—  
Pate Bryce scarce put the kettle on,  
When it flew owre his shouther.

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Printed at Warwick's Job Office.

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