

**THE HORSE-SHOE: A POEM
SPOKEN BEFORE THE PHI
BETA KAPPA SOCIETY IN
CAMBRIDGE, JULY 19, 1849**

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The horse-shoe: a poem spoken before the Phi beta kappa society in Cambridge, July 19, 1849 by
John Brooks Felton

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JOHN BROOKS FELTON

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THE
HORSE-SHOE:

A P O E M

SPOKEN BEFORE

THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY IN CAMBRIDGE,

JULY 10, 1849,

BY

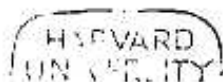
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THE HORSE-SHOE.

JUST over the way, with its front to the street,
Up one flight of stairs, is a room snug and neat.
The prospect Mark Tapley right jolly would call ; —
Three churches, one grave-yard, one bulging brick
wall,

Where, raven-like, Science gloats over her wealth,
And the skeleton grins at the lectures on health.
The tree by the window has twice hailed the spring,
Since we circled its trunk our last chorus to sing ;

Maidens laughed at our shouts, they knew better
than we,
And the world clanked its chains as we cried " We
are free."

Oft as twilight confuses day's sharply drawn line,
Its branches seem harps to the wind's " Auld Lang
Syne,"
And the dance of its shadows the quick springing
tread
Of the many all scattered, the one that is dead.

On the wall hangs a Horse-shoe I found in the
street ;
'T is the shoe that to-day sets in motion my feet ;
Though its charms are all vanished this many a
year,
And not even my " goody " regards it with fear,
'T is a comfort, while Europe, to freedom awoke,
Is chirping like chickens just free from their yolk,

To think Pope and Monarch their kingdoms may
lose ;

Yet I hang my subject wherever I choose.

Small though my theme, perchance, if rightly
sought

Its rust is stamped with ages' fossil'd thought.
They are but dreamers who, with frenzied eye,
Gaze on the mountain lifting to the sky, —
Thrill with vague rapture to the water's call,
Where hoarse Niagara thunders to its fall.
But he whom Nature hails her chosen seer,
And breathes her inmost secrets in his ear,
Makes the light scratches on the rocky side
Disclose where swept the glacier-heaving tide, —
The rounded pebble tell where moaned of yore
The wind-chased waves in vain to find a shore.

Laugh if you will, who imps nor devils fear,
Whom dark appals not, phantoms come not near,

Along whose nerves no quick vibrations dart
As teeming Twilight's shadowy offspring start ;
Not yours to feel the joy with which I flew
To snatch the rusty, worn, but lucky shoe.

Oft have I heard them chattering at my door,
The hags, whose dances beat the shrinking moor ;
Oft have I sprung from nightmare-haunted rest,
And gasped an "ero" from my panting breast,
As forms, that vanished ere the half-shut eye
With fright could open, from their revels fly.
Henceforth, good Horse-shoe, vain shall be their ride ;
Their spells are baffled, and their rage defied.

Yet are there none but witches bent on ill,
And imps of Hell, the shadowy world that fill ?
Is naught more potent than my Horse-shoe found,
To call good spirits from their homes around ?
Still must I walk in dread of unseen hurt,
And be all lonely, or by bad begirt ?

The ban-dog howls his portents at the gate,
And ticks the death-watch his alarm of fate ;
In all her myriad tongues has Night no voice
To speak good omens, — bid the heart rejoice ?

And she, to whom all hope, all love had clung,
And life was vacant when her death-knell rung, —
Say, why should come the quivering start of fear,
When she, so fondly cherished, hovers near ?
Of virtue's likeness do we shrink afraid ?
Has death a devil of an angel made ?

From scenes like this how glad the Fancy flies,
Where jocund spirits fill the earth and skies, —
Where roams the shepherd o'er the vine-clad hill,
And hears the Naiad murmur in the rill !
Now tunes his pipes to sing how Venus came
With fatal joys to crown a shepherd's flame,
And blest Apollo leads his flocks to graze,
While forests listen as the master plays !