

John Jamieson (1759-1836)

1 *Water Kelpie*

Aft, owre the bent, with heather blent,
And throw the forest brown,
I tread the path to yon green strath,
Quhare brae-born Esk rins down.
Its banks alang, quhilk hazels thrang, 5
Quhare sweet-sair'd hawthorns blow,
I lufe to stray, and view the play
Of fleckit scules below.

Ae summer e'en, upon the green,
I laid me down to gaze; 10
The place right nigh, quhare Carity
His humble tribute pays:
And Prosen proud, with rippet loud,
Cums ravin' frae his glen;
As gin he nicht auld Esk affricht, 15
And drive him back agen.

An ancient tour appear't to lour
Athort the neighbourin plain
Quhais chieftain bauld, in times of auld,
The kintrie call't his ain. 20
Its honours cow't, it's now forhow't,
And left the houlat's prey;
Its skuggin' wude, aboon the flude,
With gloom owrespreads the day.

A dreary shade the castle spread, 25
And mirker grew the lift;
The croonin' kie the byre drew nigh,
The darger left his thrift.
The lavrock shill on erd was still,
The westlin wind fell loun; 30
The fisher's houp forgat to loup,
And aw for rest made boun.

I seem't to sloom, quham throw the gloom
I saw the river shak,
And heard a whush alangis it rush, 35
Gart aw my members quak;
Syne, in a stound, the pool profound
To cleave in twain appear'd:
And huly throw the frichtsom how
His form a gaist uprear'd. 40

He rashes bare, and seggs, for hair,
Quhare ramper-eels entwined;
Of filthy gar his ee-brees war,
With esks and horse-gells lined.
And for his een, with dowie sheen, 45
Twa huge horse-mussels glared:
From his wide mow a torrent flew,
And soupt his reedy beard.

Twa slauky stanes seemit his spule-banes:
His briskit braid, a whin; 50
Ilk rib sae bare, a skelvy skair;
Ilk arm a monstrous fin.
He frae the wame a fish became,
With shells aw coverit owre:
And for his tail, the grislie whale 55
Could nevir match its pow'r.

With dreddour I, quhan he drew nigh,
Had maistly swarfit outright:
Less fleyit, at lenth I gatherit strenth,
And speirit quhat was this wicht. 60
Syne thrice he shook his fearsom bulk,
And thrice he snockerit loud;
From ilka ee the fire-flauchts flee,
And flash alangis the flude.

Quhan words he found, their elritch sound 65
Was like the norlan blast,
Frae yon deep glack, at Catla's back,
That skeegs the dark-brown waste.

The troublit pool conveyit the gowl
Down to yon echoin rock; 70
And to his maik, with wilsum skraik,
Ilk bird its terror spoke.

The trout, the par, now here, now thare,
As in a widdrim bang;
The gerron gend gaif sic a stend, 75
As on the yird him flang:
And down the stream, like levin's gleam,
The fleggit salmond flew;
The ottar yap his prey let drap,
And to his hiddils drew. 80

"Vile droich," he said, "art nocht afraid
Thy mortal life to tyne?
How dar'st thou seik with me till speik,
Sae far aboon thy line?
Yet sen thou hast thai limits past, 85
That sinder sprites frae men,
Thy life I'll spare, and aw declare,
That worms like thee may ken.

"In kintries nar, and distant far,
Is my renoun propall't; 90
As is the leid, my name ye'll reid,
But here I'm *Kelpie* call't.
The strypes and burns, throw aw their turns,
As weel's the waters wide,
My laws obey, their spring-heads frae, 95
Doun till the salt sea tide.

"Like some wild staig, I aft stravaig,
And scamper on the wave:
Quha with a bit my mow can fit,
May gar me be his slave. 100
To him I'll wirk, baith morn and mirk,
Quhile he has wark to do;
Gin tent he tak I do nae shak
His bridle frae my mow.

“Quhan Murphy’s laird his biggin rear’d, 105
 I carryit aw the stanes;
 And mony a chiell has heard me squeal
 For sair-brizz’d back and banes.
 Within flude-mark, I aft do wark
 Gudewillit, quhan I please; 110
 In quarries deep, quhile uthers sleep,
 Greit blocks I win with ease.

“Yon bonny brig quhan folk wald big,
 To gar my stream look braw;
 A sair-toil’d wicht was I be nicht; 115
 I did mair than thaim aw,
 And weel thai kent quhat help I lent,
 For thai yon image fram’t,
 Aboon the pend whilk I defend;
 And it thai *Kelpie* nam’t. 120

“Quhan lads and lasses wauk the clais,
 Narby yon whinny hicht,
 The sound of me their daffin lays;
 Thai dare na mudge for fricht.
 Now in the midst of them I scream, 125
 Quhan toozlin’ on the haugh;
 Than quihher by thaim doun the stream,
 Loud nickerin in a lauch.

“Sicklike’s my fun, of wark quhan run:
 But I do meikle mair; 130
 In pool or ford can nane be smur’d
 Gin *Kelpie* be nae there.
 Fow lang, I wat, I ken the spat,
 Quhair ane sall meet his deid:
 Nor wit nor pow’r put aff the hour, 135
 For his wanweird decreed.

“For oulks befoir, alangis the shoir,
 Or dancin’ down the stream,
 My lights are seen to blaze at e’en,
 With wull wanerthly gleam. 140
 The hind cums in, gif haim he win,

And cries, as he war wod;
'Sum ane sall soon be carryit down
By that wanchancy flude.'

"The taiken leil thai ken fow weel, 145
On water-sides quha won;
And aw but thai, quha's weird I spae,
Fast frae the danger run.
But fremmit fouk I thus provoke
To meit the fate thai flee: 150
To wilderit wichts thai're waefow lichts,
But lichts of joy to me.

"With rufow cries, that rend the skies,
Thair fate I seem to mourn,
Like crocodile, on banks of Nile; 155
For I still do the turn.
Douce, cautious men aft fey are seen;
Thai rin as thai war heyrt,
Despise all rede, and court their dede:
By me are thai inspir't. 160

"Yestreen the water was in spate,
The stanners aw war cur'd:
A man, nae stranger to the gate,
Raid up to tak the ford.
The haill town sware it wadna ride; 165
And Kelpie had been heard:
But nae a gliffin wad he bide,
His shroud I had prepared.

"The human schaip I sometimes aip:
As Prosenhaugh raid haim, 170
Ae starnless nicht, he gat a fricht,
Maist crackt his bustuous frame.
I, in a glint, lap on ahint,
And in my arms him fang't;
To his dore-cheik I kept the cleik: 175
The carle was sair bemang't.

"My name itsell wirks like a spell,

And quiet the house can keep;
Quhan greits the wean, the nurse in vain,
Thoch tyke-tyrit, tries to sleip. 180
But gin scho say, 'Lie still, ye skrae,
There's Water Kelpie's chap';
It's fleyit to wink, and in a blink
It sleips as sound's a tap."

He said, and thrice he rais't his voice, 185
And gaif a horrid gowl:
Thrice with his tail, as with a flail,
He struck the flying pool.
A thunderclap seem't ilka wap,
Resoundin' throw the wude; 190
The fire thrice flash't; syne in he splash't,
And sunk beneath the flude.

1802-03

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