

*JAMIE TELFER OF THE FAIR DODHEAD*

AN ANCIENT BORDER BALLAD

1. It fell about the Martinmas tyde,  
    Whan our Border steeds get corn and hay,  
    The Captain of Bewcastle hath bound him to ryde,  
    And he's ower to Tividale to drive a prey.
2. The first ae guide that they met wi',  
    It was high up in Hardhaughswire,  
    The second guide that they met wi',  
    It was laigh down in Borthwick water.
3. "What tidings, what tidings, my trusty guide?"—  
    —"Nae tidings, nae tidings, I hae to thee;  
    But gin ye'll gae to the fair Dodhead,  
    Mony a cow's cauf I'll let thee see."
4. And whan they cam to the fair Dodhead,  
    Right hastily they clam the peel,  
    They loosed the kye out, ane and a',  
    And ranshakled the house right weel.
5. Now Jamie Telfer's heart was sair,  
    The tear aye rowing in his e'e,  
    He pled wi' the Captain to hae his gear,  
    Or else revenged he wad be.
6. The Captain turned him round, and leugh,  
    Said—"Man, there's naething in thy house,  
    But ae auld sword without a sheath,  
    That hardly now wad fell a mouse!"
7. The sun was na up, but the moon was down,  
    It was the gryming of a new fa'n snaw,  
    Jamie Telfer has run ten myles a-foot,  
    Between the Dodhead and the Stobs's Ha'.
8. And whan he cam to the fair tower yate,  
    He shouted loud, and cried weel hie,  
    Till out bespak auld Gibby Elliot—  
    "Whae's this that brings the fray to me?"—

9. "It's I, Jamie Telfer o' the fair Dodhead,  
And a harried man I think I be!  
There's naething left at the fair Dodhead,  
But a waefu' wife and bairnies three."—
10. "Gar seek your succour at Branksome Ha',  
For succour ye'se get nane frae me!  
Gae seek your succour where ye paid black mail,  
For man! ye ne'er paid money to me."
11. Jamie has turned him round about,  
I wat the tear blinded his e'e—  
"I'll ne'er pay mail to Elliot again,  
And the fair Dodhead I'll never see!"
12. "My hounds may a' rin masterless,  
My hawks may fly frae tree to tree,  
My Lord may grip my vassal lands,  
For there again maun I never be!"
13. He has turned him to the Tiviot side,  
E'en as fast as he could drie,  
Till he cam to the Coultart Cleugh,  
And there he shouted baith loud and hie.
14. Then up bespak him auld Jock Grieve—  
"Whae's this that brings the fray to me?"—  
—"It's I, Jamie Telfer o' the fair Dodhead,  
A harried man I trew I be!"
15. "There's naething left in the fair Dodhead,  
But a greeting wife and bairnies three,  
And sax poor ca's stand in the sta',  
A' routing loud for their minnie."—
16. "Alack a wae!" quo' auld Jock Grieve,  
Alack! my heart is sair for thee!  
For I was married on the elder sister,  
And you on the youngest of a' the three."
17. Then he has ta'en out a bonny black,  
Was right weel fed wi' corn and hay,  
And he's set Jamie Telfer on his back,  
To the Catslockhill to tak the fray.

18. And whan he cam to the Catslockhill,  
He shouted loud, and cried weel hie,  
Till out and spak him William's Wat—  
"O whae's this brings the fray to me?"—
19. "It's I, Jamie Telfer o' the fair Dodhead,  
A harried man I think I be!  
The Captain o' Bewcastle has driven my gear,  
For God's sake, rise, and succour me!"—
20. "Alas for wae!" quo' William's Wat,  
"Alack, for thee my heart is sair!  
I never cam bye the fair Dodhead,  
That ever I fand thy basket bare."
21. He's set his twa sons on coal-black steeds,  
Himsel' upon a freckled gray,  
And they are on wi' Jamie Telfer,  
To Branksome Ha' to tak the fray.
22. And whan they cam to Branksome Ha',  
They shouted a' baith loud and hie,  
Till up and spak him auld Buccleuch,  
Said—"Whae's this brings the fray to me?"—
23. "It's I, Jamie Telfer o' the fair Dodhead,  
And a harried man I think I be!  
There's nought left in the fair Dodhead,  
But a greeting wife, and bairnies three."—
24. "Alack for wae!" quo' the gude auld Lord,  
And ever my heart is wae for thee!  
But fye gar cry on Willie, my son,  
And see that he cum to me speedilie!
25. "Gar warn the water, braid and wide,  
Gar warn it sune and hastilie!  
They that winna ride for Telfer's kye,  
Let them never look in the face o' me!
26. "Warn Wat o' Harden, and his sons,  
Wi' them will Borthwick water ride;  
Warn Gaudilands, and Allanhaugh,  
And Gilmanscleugh, and Commonsie.

27. “Ride by the gate at Priesthaughswire,  
And warn the Currors o’ the Lee;  
As ye cum down the Hermitage Slack,  
Warn doughty Willie o’ Gorrinberry.”—
28. The Scots they rade, the Scots they ran,  
Sae starkly and sae steadilie!  
And aye the ower-word o’ the thrang  
Was—“Rise for Branksome readilie!”
29. The gear was driven the Frostylee up,  
Frae the Frostylee unto the plain,  
Whan Willie has looked his men before,  
And saw the kye right fast driving.
30. “Whae drives thir kye?” can Willie say,  
“To mak an outspeckle o’ me?”—  
—“It’s I, the Captain o’ Bewcastle, Willie,  
I winna layne my name for thee.”—
31. “O will ye let Telfer’s kye gae back?  
Or will ye do aught for regard o’ me?  
Or, by the faith of my body,” quo’ Willie Scott,  
I’se ware my dame’s cauf’s skin on thee!”—
32. “I winna let the kye gae back,  
Neither for thy love, nor yet thy fear,  
But I will drive Jamie Telfer’s kye,  
In spite of every Scot that’s here.”—
33. “Set on them, lads!” quo’ Willie than,  
“Fye, lads, set on them cruellie!  
For ere they win to the Ritterford,  
Mony a toom saddle there sall be!”
34. Then till’t they gaed wi’ heart and hand,  
The blows fell thick as bickering hail,  
And mony a horse ran masterless,  
And mony a comely cheek was pale!
35. But Willie was stricken ower the head,  
And through the knapscap the sword has gane,  
And Harden grat for very rage,  
Whan Willie on the grund lay slane.

36. But he's taen aff his gude steel cap,  
And thrice he's waved it in the air—  
The Dinlay snaw was ne'er mair white  
Nor the lyart locks of Harden's hair.
37. "Revenge! Revenge!" auld Wat can cry,  
"Fye, lads, lay on them cruellie!  
We'll ne'er see Tiviot side again,  
Or Willie's death revenged sall be."
38. O mony a horse ran masterless,  
The splintered lances flew on hie,  
But or they wan to the Kershope ford,  
The Scots had gotten the victory.
39. John o' Brigham there was slane,  
And John o' Barlow, as I hear say;  
And thirty mae o' the Captain's men,  
Lay bleeding on the grund that day.
40. The Captain was run through the thick of the thigh,  
And broken was his right leg bane,  
If he had lived this hundred years,  
He had never been loved by woman again.
41. "Hae back thy kye!" the Captain said,  
"Dear kye, I trow, to some they be!  
For gin I suld live a hundred years,  
There will ne'er fair lady smile on me."
42. Then word is gane to the Captain's bride,  
Even in the bower where that she lay,  
That her Lord was prisoner in enemy's land,  
Since into Tividale he had led the way.
43. "I wad lourd have had a winding sheet,  
And helped to put it ower his head,  
Ere he had been disgraced by the *Border Scot*,  
Whan he ower Liddel his men did lead!"—
44. There was a wild gallant amang us a',  
His name was Watty wi' the Wudspurs,  
Cried—"On for his house in Stanegirthside,  
If ony man will ride with us!"

45. Whan they cam to the Stanegirthside,  
They dang wi' trees, and burst the door,  
They loosed out a' the Captain's kye,  
And set them forth our lads before.
46. There was an auld wife ayont the fire,  
A wee bit o' the Captain's kin—  
“Whae dare loose out the Captain's kye,  
Or answer to him and his men?”—
47. “It's I, Watty Wudspurs, loose the kye!  
I winna layne my name frae thee!  
And I will loose out the Captain's kye,  
In scorn of a' his men and he.”
48. Whan they cam to the fair Dodhead,  
They were a wellcum sight to see!  
For instead of his ain ten milk kye,  
Jamie Telfer has gotten thirty and three.
49. And he has paid the rescue shot,  
Baith wi' gowd, and white monie,  
And at the burial o' Willie Scott,  
I wat was mony a weeping e'e.