

The Hippocrump

Along the valley of the Ump
Gallops the fearful Hippocrump.
His hide is leathery and thick;
His eyelids open with a “CLICK!”
His mouth he closes with a “CLACK!”
He has three humps upon his back;
On each of these there grows a score
Of horny spikes and sometimes more.
His hair is curly, thick and brown;
Beneath his chin a beard hangs down.
He has eight feet with hideous claws;
His neck is long – and Oh his jaws!
The boldest falters in his track
To hear those hundred teeth go “Clack!”
The Hippocrump is fierce indeed,
But if he eats the baneful weed
That grows beside the Purple Lake,
His hundred teeth begin to ache.

Then how the creature stamps and roars
Along the Ump’s resounding shores!
The drowsy cattle faint with fright;
The birds fall flat, the fish turn white.
Even the rocks begin to shake
The children in their beds awake;
The old ones quiver, quail and quake.
“Alas!” they cry, “Make no mistake,
It is HIMSELF – he’s got the ache
From eating by the Purple Lake!”
Some say, “It is Old You-Know-Who
He’s in a rage; what shall we do?”
“Lock up the barns, protect the stores,
Bring all the pigs and sheep indoors!”
They call upon their god Agw-ump,
To save them from the Hippocrump.

What’s that I hear go hop-skip-jump?
“He’s coming!” “Stand aside there!” BUMP!
LUMP! – LUMP! – “He’s on the bridge now!”
LUMP – “I hear his tail” – KER-FLUMP, KER-FLUMP!
“I see the prickles on his hump!”
“It is, it IS – the Hippocrump!”
“Defend us now oh great Agw-ump!”
Thus prayed the dwellers by the Ump.
Their prayer was heard. A broken stump
Caught the intruder in the rump.
He slipped into the foaming river,
Whose icy waters quenched his fever,
Then while the creature floundering lay,
The timid people ran away;
And when the morrow dawned serene
The Hippocrump was no more seen.
Glad hymns of joy the people raised
“For ever Great Agw-ump be praised!”

James Reeves