

THE GNOME

LANTERN-LIGHT is over the fells
When the sun has sunken low;
Lantern-light and the moorland smells,
The rain on the good brown soil.
Over the moorland we go, we go,
Through the wet earth we toil. . . .

Sunken, sunken was the sun
Ere ever the moon uprose,
And the tall dark trees cast shadows dun
Over the lonely way;
Over the moorland the long path goes
We trod at the close of day.

We sped to reach the dark green hill.
The Hill of the Bloody Bowl,
And the shadows were watching, watching us still
As we crept in the shadowless path,
Over the moor to the Mother Troll
With the heart that was pierced in wrath.

Stumbling over the fallen leaves,
Sliding over the dew,
Staring up at the barley sheaves
That nod in the autumn wind,
We pushed and jostled the twilight thro',
Shrilling to those behind.

And ere the night had grown to noon
We were under the Bloody Bowl,
And then uprose a huge pale moon.

Behind the shivering trees;
And so we found the Mother Troll
Well-skilled in mysteries.

She heard our coming, and rose to the door,
And we hurried eagerly through;
We entered in with a breeze from the moor,
And stood by the fading pyre.
The air was smoky, the flame was blue,
And the face of the Troll like fire.

And so we gave her the heart of the slain,
That was slain for a dead man's sake;
She chuckled low at each blackened vein
Gory and brown and torn;
She wriggled her sides like a wounded snake
As she squeezed the blood into a horn.

Far into the fire she cast the blood,
And the flames grew twisted and red;
Her breast heaved with her passion's flood
As a hollow-eyed ghost arose
Like a cloud of stench from the rotting dead.
When a wind from a pest-house blows.

She clasped the ghost to her skinny dugs,—
No other love might she know,—
The dead man squirmed at her panting hugs,
But she had her passionate will,
And a sobbing breeze began to blow
From the top of the lonely hill.

And then a dim grey streak of dawn
Came, and the sad ghost fled,
With staring sockets and jaw-bone drawn,
Back to the desolate place;
The morning breeze grew still and dead
As it played around his face.

So we fled from the Mother Troll
Under the dawning grey;
We left the Hill of the Bloody Bowl;
Ere ever the sun uprose,
But the dead man's heart till Judgment-day
Shall there with the Troll repose.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.