

By night and by day the Troll wrought on;
 He hewed the timbers, he piled the stone;
 But day by day, as the walls rose fair,
 Darker and sadder grew Esbern Snare.

He listened by night, he watched by day, 25
 He sought and thought, but he dared not pray;
 In vain he called on the Elle-maids¹ shy,
 And the Neck and the Nis² gave no reply.

Of his evil bargain far and wide 30
 A rumour ran through the country-side;
 And Helva of Nesvek, young and fair,
 Prayed for the soul of Esbern Snare.

And now the church was wellnigh done;
 One pillar it lacked, and one alone;
 And the grim Troll muttered, "Fool thou art! 35
 To-morrow gives me thy eyes and heart!"

By Kallundborg in black despair,
 Through wood and meadow, walked Esbern Snare,
 Till, worn and weary, the strong man sank 40
 Under the birches of Ulshoi bank.

At his last day's work he heard the Troll
 Hammer and delve in the quarry's hole;
 Before him the church stood large and fair:
 "I have builded my tomb," said Esbern Snare.

And he closed his eyes the sight to hide, 45
 When he heard a light step at his side:
 "O Esbern Snare!" a sweet voice said,
 "Would I might die now in thy stead!"

¹ **Elle-maids**—The fairies.

² **Neck and the Nis**—The Neck is the River-Spirit and the Nis a general name for the goblins or brownies.