the light as quietly as they could. No sooner did Tom see Balin come into the light than he gave an awful howl. Trolls simply detest the very sight of dwarves (uncooked). Bert and Bill stopped fighting immediately, and “a sack, Tom, quick!” they said. Before Balin, who was wondering where in all this commotion Bilbo was, knew what was happening, a sack was over his head, and he was down.

“There’s more to come yet,” said Tom, “or I’m mighty mistook. Lots and none at all, it is,” said he. “No burrahobbits, but lots of these here dwarves. That’s about the shape of it!”

“I reckon you’re right,” said Bert, “and we’d best get out of the light.”

And so they did. With sacks in their hands, that they used for carrying off mutton and other plunder, they waited in the shadows. As each dwarf came up and looked at the fire, and the spilled jugs, and the gnawed mutton, in surprise, pop! went a nasty smelly sack over his head, and he was down. Soon Dwalin lay by Balin, and Fili and Kili together, and Dori and Nori and Ori all in a heap, and Oin and Gloin and Bifur and Bofur and Bombur piled uncomfortably near the fire.

“That’ll teach ’em,” said Tom; for Bifur and Bombur had given a lot of trouble, and fought like mad, as dwarves will when cornered.

Thorin came last—and he was not caught unawares. He came expecting mis-
chief, and didn’t need to see his friends’ legs sticking out of sacks to tell him that things were not all well. He stood outside in the shadows some way off, and said: “What’s all this trouble? Who has been knocking my people about?”

“It’s trolls!” said Bilbo from behind a tree. They had forgotten all about him. “They’re hiding in the bushes with sacks,” said he.

“O! are they?” said Thorin, and he jumped forward to the fire, before they could leap on him. He caught up a big branch all on fire at one end; and Bert got that end in his eye before he could step aside. That put him out of the battle for a bit. Bilbo did his best. He caught hold of Tom’s leg—as well as he could, it was thick as a young tree-trunk—but he was sent spinning up into the top of some bushes, when Tom kicked the sparks up in Thorin’s face.
The Trolls

Tom got the branch in his teeth for that, and lost one of the front ones. It made him howl, I can tell you. But just at that moment William came up behind and popped a sack right over Thorin’s head and down to his toes. And so the fight ended. A nice pickle they were all in now: all neatly tied up in sacks, with three angry trolls (and two with burns and bashes to remember) sitting by them, arguing whether they should roast them slowly, or mince them fine and
boil them, or just sit on them one by one and squash them into jelly; and Bilbo up in a bush, with his clothes and his skin torn, not daring to move for fear they should hear him.

It was just then that Gandalf came back. But no one saw him. The trolls had just decided to roast the dwarves now and eat them later—that was Bert’s idea, and after a lot of argument they had all agreed to it.

“No good roasting ’em now, it’d take all night,” said a voice. Bert thought it was William’s.

“Don’t start the argument all over again, Bill,” he said, “or it will take all night.”

“Who’s a-arguing?” said William, who thought it was Bert that had spoken.

“You are,” said Bert.

“You’re a liar,” said William; and so the argument began all over again. In the end they decided to mince them fine and boil them. So they got a great black pot, and they took out their knives.

“No good boiling ’em! We ain’t got no water, and it’s a long way to the well and all,” said a voice. Bert and William thought it was Tom’s.

“Shut up!” said they, “or we’ll never have done. And yer can fetch the water yerself, if yer say any more.”

“Shut up yerself!” said Tom, who thought it was William’s voice. “Who’s arguing but you, I’d like to know.”