

# The Magic Ring

By Mrs H. L.

At the midnight hour they met, the moon was in the wane, they dared not gaze upon her whilst they framed the magic spell. From the mossy bank the glow-worm's glimmering light played on the stream below. They stood beneath the alders dank, and spake the words of fear. He placed the mystic circlet on her hand, and watched the appointed time. From a maniac's grave, they had stolen the earth, they scattered the dust on the stream, they gazed on the northern star. That star withdrew her sparkling rays, and veiled her in a cloud in darkness, and with dread they uttered the awful spell.—The spirits of evil rejoiced, the wind moaned sadly around, the glow-worms quenched their fires, and they who had tempted their fate, who had scattered the maniac's dust, read their doom in the sighs of the wind, and wished the dread accents untold.

The forester departed, he roamed in other climes, the past appeared a dream, he thought not of his plighted vows, nor remembered the force of the spell. She dwelt in the forest glades, beside that limpid stream, far from the haunts of men in deepest solitude. Now days and months had fled, but the forester returned not; the fifth day of the week, when clouds enveloped the northern star, the wind was abroad in the oaks, and the mist and rain were eddying in the valley, the maiden bent her steps to that half-dreaded spot, beside the alders dank. She gazed upon the bright blue gem, the token of the spell; its colour was unchanged, for the wearer still was true. She longed to prove her lover's faith, and watched the heavens with dread; she uttered the words that wake the dead, and looked on the magic ring; the blue stone turned to deadly white, and she, knew her lover false. The spirits that heard the charm rejoiced in the echoes around, the midnight fogs fell damp and thick, but the chill was in her soul; consumption hovered in the mist and crept into her breast.

Her eye was bright, her cheek was fair, but the spell had numbered her days.—She dropt like the flower of the field, and passed from the face of the earth.—She sleeps beside the maniac's grave, beneath the northern star.—The forester returned.—The abode of her he once loved was desolate—the thoughts of former days resumed their power, the secret spell still worked upon his mind; it haunted him in sleep, it haunted him by day, it was around, unseen, but every where—it stamped his features with a dire deceit, the eye that met avoided him, the hearts of all turned from him, he sought affection but he found it not, he lived unloved, unwept he died; no holy prayers e'er blessed his grave, or bid his troubled spirit rest—his ashes moulder in the wind, the pilgrim shuns the spot, for there the spirits of evil perform their unearthly rites, and frame the spells of death.