

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

Balder, every metal, every wood, every animal, every plant but one small one which was overlooked, and that the mistletoe which keeps green through the winter. Everything was only too thankful to give its oath, for what would the world be without the pure sunlight. Odin, ever since he drank from the fount of wisdom, knew that the light must go out from Balder's eyes, and that death and the twilight of the gods must reign over Asgard and Midgard, and this twilight is the Norse Ragnarok, the earth's dark winter. He was depressed at the thought of Balder's death, and as he went into Asgard, he saw Thor and Balder engaging in tests of strength. Another brother, Hodor, stood apart from indulging in the sport, on account of blindness. Loke, who had found out about the mistletoe, and had some of the plant with him, said to Hodor, "Why don't you throw something at Balder, and see if it would not hurt him!" Hodor's answer was, "I can't see him and besides I have nothing to throw at him." "Come then," said the mischief-working Loke, "throw this twig at him and I will guide you to the place where he stands." Hodor did as he was asked. At once Balder fell down lifeless, and the lamentations of the gods were loud and continued, but Odin knew better than any one else what this portended; on Midgard messengers were sent to tell all nature to weep, men, animals, the earth, stones, trees and metals, and they were soon covered with frost-tears, and the earth enshrouded in gloom. Balder's body was carried to his ship, Ringhorn, and that was his funeral pile,—his wife Nanna, heart-broken from the death of her beloved was laid beside him, and his horse, fully caparisoned was also placed upon the pile, and all were consumed by fire after Thor had consecrated

it with his hammer, Mjolner. After the death of Balder, Thor thundered and stormed in grief for his brother and Loke trembled for Thor blamed him for the evil he had done, so Loke changed himself into a fish, hiding beneath the seaweed of the ocean, but Odin, the all-wise and all-seeing, knew where he was, and with Thor spread a net for him. Loke could not escape for it was spread over all the ocean, and he had to come out of his muddy hiding place to breathe. Then they said, "Come back to your own form," and so he was borne back to Asgard. The decree of the gods was, "Let him be bound." So they took him to a cavern and bound him to three sharp pointed rocks placed in it, then a serpent was placed above him to drop venom upon him, but his wife stood beside him and with a cup caught the drops as they fell, however when the cup was filled and while she was emptying it, some fell on Loke and he used to shriek and writhe with pain; this produced what men call earthquakes. Loke symbolises Fire; there is still a saying among the Norse that when the fire crackles, Loke is whipping his children.

Thor was overpowered in the final battle by the deadly poison of the Midgard serpent with which he had such a terrific battle. Now comes the end; the Fenris wolf and Loke are freed from their fetters,—the gods, even Odin, are all dead; the Frost giants are on the rainbow bridge, the shining city of Asgard is destroyed, Ygdrasil, the tree of life, is in ashes; as the Norns foretold, the end has come, and the Twilight of the gods, the Reign of Darkness, rules.

In this one particular Norse mythology differs essentially from the Greek,—the gods die. It was a great factor for christian missionaries that they did die, for it made