

# THE NEW EARTH

## BY HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

AGES came and went, and there was no one to count their years as they passed; starless and sunless, the sea rolled and moaned in the great abyss of space. How long that dim twilight lasted no one will ever know, for who, save the All-father, numbered the ages or kept reckoning of their flight! Invisible, unmoved, the eternal Spirit who had ruled over all things from the beginning, and whose servants the mightiest of the gods had been, kept watch over the starless spaces of the universe, sowing in the measureless furrows the seeds of a new world and a new race.

At last the hour was ripe, and a faint glow stole through the dusky space and spread itself over the sea. It was so dim at first that the waves were hardly coloured by it, but it deepened and deepened until it lay rose-red across the waters, and made all the upper air rich and beautiful. Moment by moment the sky kindled and sent its new glory deep into the heart of the sea, until at last, though there was no song to welcome it, no grateful eyes of men and women to watch its coming, a new sun stood at the threshold of a new day and filled the hollow heavens and the great deep with light and warmth. All day the splendour of the new time bathed air and water in its glow, and when the sun sank at last in the west, and the old darkness began to steal back again, one by one the stars found their places and set their silver lamps swinging in the restless waves.

Day followed day, and night followed night, and yet sun and stars looked down on a wide waste of waters. But there came a day at last when the waters were parted by a point of land, and hour by hour it widened as a new earth rose fresh and beautiful out of the depths of the sea. Over it the sun poured such a glow of warmth that life stirred under every sod; trees shot from the rich soil and made new forests for the wind to play upon; the grass spread itself softly over the barren places, and with deft fingers wove a garment for the whole earth; flowers bloomed along the hillsides and opened their fragrant leaves deep in the forests; birds broke the stillness of the woods and made circles of song in the upper air; the rivers flowed on silently to the sea; the fjords caught once more the shadows of the mountains; and the waterfalls were white with foam of rushing streams.

And when all was ready, and the blue sky once more overarched a world of peace and joy and fruitful fields, Balder came back more fair and beautiful than in the old days at Asgard. With him came his brother Hoder, who had killed him, and they were not long alone; for one by one Hoeligner, Vidar, and Vale rejoined them. The flame had not touched so much as the hem of their garments, nor

had the floods destroyed them. Thor's work was done, but his sons, Magne and Mode, brought back to earth the wonderful hammer which had so often flashed over frost-giants and rung in their ears. More wonderful than all, out of Mimer's forest, where the fountain of memory once stood, and through which the feet of Odin had so often gone in search of knowledge, came Lifthraser and Lif, the one man and woman who had escaped the ruin of the world. And they drank the dew of the morning and grew strong and beautiful. They plucked the sweet new flowers and turned the furrows of the fresh earth, and the harvests waved for them abundantly in all the future years until their children and their children's children filled the whole earth.

The beautiful plain of Ida lay green and bright all the year and bordered with perennial flowers as the suns circled around it; and the gods were at peace at last. No frost-giants invaded the new heaven or darkened the new earth. Through the long bright days Balder and Hoder often sat together and talked of the olden time, of the Midgard-serpent, and the wolf Fenrer, and of Loki's misdoings. Through earth and heaven there was unbroken rest; for often when the gods met to take counsel together the voice of the unseen All-father spoke to them with infinite wisdom, appeasing quarrels, pronouncing judgment, and establishing peace for ever and ever. And so through all the ages the new world will move to the end. Trees will wave, flowers bloom, stars shine, rivers flow, men toil and reap in the fruitful fields, the gods look lovingly down from the plain of Ida upon their labours; for the hand of the great All-father will lift men through obedience and industry to himself.