

The Gods of the Saxon

Mary Austin

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WE have set the White Christ forward, we have bid the old gods go,
We be Christians, Christian peoples, singing psalm tunes staid and slow.
We have strewn the graven idols, we are bounden to the Lord,
In hoc signo it is written but we prove it with the sword.

For the old gods played us hazards, and they tracked us in their wrath
By the smoke of sacrifices that we made along our path;
Saved us to outwit each other; broke us if they listed, then,
And at best of all their saving they were gods, and we were men.

But the White Christ he is lowly, he hath thorns about his brow,
He hath sorrowed, he hath suffered, Lord, what boots thy sorrow now?
Seeing that we give our brother to the kite-kind and the crow,
And the shell-strewn bones to whiten where the shy wild-cattle go.

And the old gods gather, gather where the shrilling bugles break,
For the hot blown breath of battle fans the elder gods awake,
Calling high above the trumpets, saying, "Thus the old rune runs,
By the net that took the fathers ye shall surely snare the sons.

"By the bitter lust of empire, by the fret of boasts withstood,
By the itch of prideful peoples that must make their boastings good,
In the fern damp, by the veldt-side, we have brought them stark and low,
They that wake no more for mornings, nor for any winds that blow."

We be Christians, Christian peoples, thinking scorn of ruder days,
But above the Pax Vobiscum, keener than the prayers we raise,
Come the jeering gods of warfare from the ends of all the earth,
By the White Christ, wan and wounded, and they mock him with their mirth.

LOS ANGELES, CAL.