

through the vengeance of him of the Blue Sword," observed Tergivus; "but this is a mere worthless slave, after whom none will inquire."

"My grandfather holds a slave of full worth," cried Attalus, hotly.

"Thy grandfather is a saint," interposed Bishop Silius. "Deem not that we would ask thee to do aught that he would hold as evil; yet it is permitted to dissemble with the unbeliever, and we would fain save thee from pollution and hardship such as he would dread for thee."

"He would not have me act treacherously, nor send another into my own danger," cried Attalus.

"The boy *will* not," whispered Tergivus. "No doubt he likes the freedom of the Frank better than his books."

This was very sore to Attalus, just as he had begun to feel that he was doing something brave and true, of which his grandfather and uncle would approve. Bred up by such men as Gregory and Tetricus, he little knew the artful spirit which oppression had engendered among the Gallo-Romans, and he shrank back from Silius when beckoned up to him.

"Do not persuade me to be mean," was on his tongue.

"My son, Heaven forbid that I should persuade thee to what thy good and holy grandfather would forbid. It was only that my good friends would spare thee, yea, and him, from ills thou dost not guess at. When—if—thou seest him again, let him know that the device was not mine, and I only might have consented in the hope of saving thee, my fair lad, the jewel of his old age."

"God can save me," said Attalus.

"Christ in the fort,
Christ in the field."

There was a strange, bright gleam on the boy's face and uplifted eyes as that sense of confidence came home to him.

Silius bowed his head and wept. It might be for the child who knew not what he was to encounter, or it might be for those loftier, purer thoughts which had become obscured in him by the long and weary course of striving to bend with the storm and avoid oppression.

CHAPTER VII.—ATTALUS LEFT ALONE.

That quiet night in Silius' household was the last peaceful one that Attalus was to enjoy for many a month. It was still early morning, and the first hymns of the day were being sung in the church attached, as usual, to the Bishop's dwelling, when there was a thundering at the door and shouts for the little dog of a Roman.

He durst not wait for anything but Silius'

hasty blessing and murmur of "God help thee, good and high-souled child, and bring thee back to thy grandfather!"

The Bishop was too much in dread of the wild Franks willingly to show himself, but Tergivus would have led the boy forth. Attalus, however, put his hands behind his back, marched forth, and solemnly said, "I give myself as King Hildebert's hostage, of mine own free will and by the desire of my grandfather, Bishop Gregory."

Nobody particularly attended to him, and as he spoke Gaulish Latin the Franks would not have understood him if they had, but it gave him a certain feeling of being like Regulus, whose story he told to old Gola, walking beside his mule.

Perhaps it was well that he should have such consolation, as they went through moors that grew wider and with less and less token of habitation, though still with the straight Roman way to guide them. He asked for Festus, and Gola answered that he had been claimed by a shaggy Frank, who told King Hildebert that he wanted a groom to tend his horses Roman fashion. The poor fellow had wept, and declared that he belonged to Bishop Gregory; but was only laughed at and told that the Bishop was no better than a bondsman himself, and so he was beaten and driven away.

Then, when there was a halt, and Gola was producing the wallet of provisions which Silius' pitying household had replenished, a great rude voice shouted out something about seeing what the gluttonous little Roman was swallowing, and a big hand clutched the bag away, leaving Attalus and Gola nothing but the dry morsels of bread remaining from their original store. Hot tears rose to the boy's eyes, and he would have cried out against the spoiler, but Gola held him fast, with a sign to hold his peace, and he recollected that to break out at that fierce-looking man might be dangerous. He never saw the wallet again, except hanging as a pouch at the girdle of the Frank. Gola, however, contrived at night to get a lump of half-raw goat's flesh for supper, which he was hungry enough to devour down to the very bone. But worse still was to come. Gola had wrapped him up and laid him down to sleep under a tree, with the mule tethered near; but when the sound of horns and the confusion of voices awoke him, the mule was gone. Gola was out of sight, too, but presently, on his frightened call, came back to him.

"Ah! poor Jugurtha," he said, with tears in his eyes; "his halter has been cut and he has been carried off by that malicious young heathen. I followed, but he laughed at me. Alas! what will become of him?"

(To be continued.)