

## FOR THE WHITE CHRIST

"No, lord king. What could the brother of Hildegarde gain by the slaying? No; it was another, — whom I could name. But I do not come for vengeance, dear lord; I come only to open your eyes to the truth, that the Thuringians may not take you unawares. Well was it you journeyed so swiftly out of Saxon Land. I call to mind the words of that red boar Hardrat: 'Never shall Karl cross again over Rhine Stream.'"

The king flung out his hand.

"God forgive me, Olvir!" he muttered. "The scroll which maddened me —"

"In seeking my death, lord king, they have sealed their own doom. I could not name them, so they have themselves sent their names to the lord whom they would have betrayed. It is God's will. My counsel to the King of the Franks: In the name of Christ, there has been much to rouse hatred and enmity against your rule, — harshness and cruelty. You have listened to the ill counsel of this misguided daughter of God. Therefore I say to you, bear in mind your own deeds, and be merciful to the wrongdoers. Now I go. The outlaw will not again trouble the son of Pepin. God be with you!"

"Stay, Olvir! You shall not go!" cried Karl, and, freeing himself from Fastrada, he came with a rush to seize the Northman's shoulders in his iron grasp. "Now I hold you fast, kinsman. You shall not go from me. No longer are you outlaw. You shall wed your betrothed, and stay in my hall, Count Palatine, in the stead of Worad of Metz. He whom the king has wrongfully doomed to shame shall sit on the king's judgment-seat."

"My lord! my lord!" — the queen's voice rose to a scream — "what would you do? My father! Kosru! See the bloody knife. You'd take the murderer's word against a score —"