

rude relics of their feast lay on the tables around.

The kings were uncle and nephew, but there was not much difference in their ages. They both looked harsh and rugged, but Hildebert, whom Attalus had seen once or twice before, looked somewhat the more civilized, or it might be only that his hair and beard were less rough, and his dress nearer the Roman than that of Theudebert, who was very much sunburned, and, save for his rich sword-belt and the jeweled chain at his neck, might have been taken for a mere hunter. Their chiefs were with them, and Bishop Silius, whom Attalus knew already and looked to with hope; but the Bishop was a timid man, and looked very uncomfortable at Theudebert's right hand. Garfried, for whom the poor boy looked, was not there.

"Ha! Wolfram," cried the king, "hast brought the hostage?"

"Ay, Herr King, I have brought the priest's darling here, petted up like a lady's tame fawn. The old Bishop made no small ado at parting from him. Sent mule and slaves with him, forsooth."

"He'll set high store by him, nephew," said Hildebert, laughing. "Thou wilt make a good profit of thy pledge, even if it be not convenient to me to part with the cities."

"It skills me not to barter and bargain," replied Theudebert, carelessly. "Take him, Hunderik, keep him safe, and we will do the best we can with him."

"Trust me, Herr King, I will see to the little Roman rogue like a fresh-caught foal."

The epithet was not given tenderly, or it might have been hopeful. However, the bishop held out his hand to Attalus, and presently ventured to ask whether he might not have the guardianship of the young hostage; but this was received with a burst of rude laughter, and a declaration that he was too much of the same sort as the old man at Langres, and would quickly know how to let the child slip through his fingers. However, they allowed him to take Attalus home with him for the night, Hunderik fiercely telling him that he should be held accountable for the production of the pledge the next morning.

"See, Bishop Silius, if that's what they call thee! thou claimest to be a shepherd, as they tell me. Herd this same sheep of mine to the best of thy power, for if thou lettest him go, thy priests shall aby it."

Attalus had never heard such uncivil language addressed to his grandfather; but Bishop Silius was a timid, though a very kind man, and had never inspired respect in the wild Franks, who had only become nominal Christians at the will of Clovis. He hurried out of the theatre and along the street, holding the hand of Attalus, evidently in dread of the

scoffs and laughter that broke out at the coward priest. "Like an old ewe and her lamb," cried one rude voice, raising a storm of mocking voices.

"Oh, my lamb, my lamb, would that I could keep you!" he cried; and no sooner was he within the shelter of his own house than he drew the boy into his arms, and wept over him profusely, as the lamb thrown to the wolves. How could his holy brother Gregory consent?

"It was the only way to save the peasants or the town from being sacked," said Attalus.

"Ah! thou art the lamb indeed, the victim," exclaimed Silius. "Would that there were means of saving thee from these pagans, who know not God and will make thee forget Him."

"God will not forget me," dreamily answered Attalus.

"Good child! Ah! it is foul sin and shame to let him go among the heathen, and be beaten and foully used. Yet that ferocious robber will require him of me, and it will go ill with us if we hide him or keep him back."

"See here, your Holiness," said one of the bishop's train, a dark, sinister-looking subdeacon, not young, "there is a child here very like the noble Attalus—a slave lad, the son of the deceased slave woman Retia. He has the same dark eyes and light hair, he is quick-witted, and is clever in waiting at your Holiness's tables. Change the dress, and none of those Franks, who were all half drunk last night, would know the difference. Then, when these two kings and their rabble followers have left the city, it will be easy to pass the young patrician back to Langres or Autun."

"It is a risk," said one of the priests, thoughtfully. "Yet Retius is quick-witted and would support the part, and as long as they found him not out, he would be better off there than as a slave here."

"Or, even if they discovered him, they would do him no harm," continued the subdeacon Tergivus. "Let this noble boy lie quiet and out of sight here till all are well away, then could we pass him home to his Clemency of Langres by the time all was forgotten."

"But," said Attalus, looking in utter surprise from one to the other, "my grandfather would not have me if I ran away and broke the terms."

"Nay, child, I said not that thou shouldst go back at once, when peril could come; wait here—or, as a safer place, at Tours—till the bargain is forgotten."

Attalus shook his head. "The Frank Wolfram offered to take the son of Garfried of the Blue Sword instead of me, and my grandfather would not, because Baldrik had been committed to his trust."

"That might have brought danger, on him