

something responsive arose in her heart in answer to his caresses. However, she submitted to the inevitable.

Meanwhile the house had been left empty. All had gone to see this most exciting chase, except a few colts that had been shut in lest they should impede the others. They had, at Leo's suggestion, been left under the care of the Roman hostage.

And now, turning back from the eager throng, Leo made his way to the meadow, and there walked along on the other side of the rude stone inclosure that shut in the colts, and when he came near the place where the boy was standing he bent down, and lying on the ground under the wall, he called in a low voice, "Attalus!"

There was a start, and the instant inquiry, "Is it Leo?"

"Take care! Turn thyself away from me. Keep thine eyes on the troop out there. Let no one guess we are talking."

The voice seemed to come out of the earth, but Attalus obeyed it.

"Now, listen, before I am missed. Our time is come. This is an opportunity for returning home."

A thrill of ecstasy darted through the limbs of the poor hostage, but the word "How?" was hardly uttered before Leo added, "Do not sleep sound to-night, but wait near the gate of the yard till I shall call thee. No more now."

And Leo was gone, while Attalus, hardly believing he had heard aright, walked up and down, trying to understand what had come so suddenly upon him, endeavoring to collect his ideas so as to pray that the deliverance that seemed so near might be no delusion, and when called to supper forcing himself to eat, though his agitation was so great that he could hardly swallow, even while he suspected that it might be well to lay in a good store in case of flight.

He had long hours to wait by the time Leo, using full speed, had come back to the house. For indeed he had much to do—the banquet was to be prepared again, now that the capture had been made, and Leo's whole attention was required for the various concoctions for the evening festival.

Roswitha, silent if not reconciled, was brought back to have all the female skill of the household employed on her hair and robes. Valhild, sullen and disappointed, had been caught by a young Frank, who was expending all his offers and persuasions on her father for what was in fact her purchase.

Leo was called on to assist his master in the reckoning, and it ended in the acceptance of the terms. Valhild was a certain incumbrance, and more would be left for Hundbert. So the two children sat side by side as brides, and the

feast was redoubled in length and boisterous mirth. When at length the revelers retired to their beds, Leo had to assist in serving a highly unnecessary cup all round, and as the bridegroom of the morrow looked out of his box-bed he exclaimed, "Ha! my new father's trusty man! How is it that thou dost not take one of his horses and flee away over the border?"

"The very thing I mean to do to-night," replied Leo, in the like tone of banter.

"Then our people had better take care thou dost not carry off anything of ours," sleepily replied Aldebert, and turned round to rest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RIDE FOR FREEDOM.

Watching, praying, wearying, walking about in the dark to keep himself awake, sometimes resting, then sleeping a little against his will and dreaming he was in the halls of Langres, then waking to try to reckon how far the stars were on their path, Attalus waited. Once he thought himself pursued, and woke to the certainty that he heard a great trampling of the horses, then saw there was a faint tinge of dawn in the east, and that the great star he had been watching was lower in the sky. Philetus had taught him to call that planet Jupiter. Would he begin all over again with Philetus?

There was a step near. He durst not move till he heard the low murmur, "Art thou there, and ready?"

"Most ready, O Leo!"

"All are sound asleep at last. Didst thou leave the gate open?"

"No—is it so?"

"Wide open, and the horses gone."

"It must have been left open when all went to try to get a share of the feast," said Attalus, for it was generally secured with a thong of leather or a nail. "I think Whitefoot and Longmane would come at my whistle; or could we not escape best on foot?"

"Hardly safe; the ground is not broken enough if the horses are caught by others. Try what thou canst do."

The lad whistled in a low, peculiar note, and the dark outlines of two of the horses which had not strayed far could be seen trotting up. They were fond of Attalus and were easily secured, with a little coaxing, and he had their saddles and bridles hanging up in the shed.

"Hast thou arms?" asked Leo.

"I am never trusted with them, not even a boar spear."

"I will fetch some," said Leo.

Attalus held his two steeds, caressing their necks softly, and bidding them bear him well to home and joy, while Leo ran lightly toward the house, where he took up a buckler and a