

being over, they two have bound themselves by a treaty of peace to deliver pledges on either side, each to each; and King Hildebert therefore calls on you, as in duty bound, to deliver up to him your young grandson, to be made a hostage to King Theudebert for his peaceful behavior and for the surrender of the cities of Nasium and Tullium into his hands."

"My grandson!" repeated Gregory, in distress.

"Yea! Where is he? He is to be in King Theudebert's safe-keeping, together with other nobly born, until such time as the cities be restored to him by King Hildebert."

"My grandson belongs to the Roman Empire," said Gregory, with little hope, but doing all in his power to save Attalus from such a fate.

"Then let your Roman Empire look to him if it can," sneered Wolfram, gaining more assurance.

"What have we to do with quarrels of your Hildeberts and Theudeberts?" cried Tetricus, waxing angry, perhaps rash. "Why takes he not one of his own nobles?"

"That is known to the kings themselves, thou shaven priest," said Wolfram, contemptuously.

"And what if I refuse to let my grandson be taken to be hostage in a quarrel wherewith I have no concern?"

"Then," said the Frank, swinging his axe from his shoulder, "the Kings Hildebert and Theudebert will wreak their just wrath on yonder miserable serfs of farmers and the like, for the disobedience and presumption of one who should have taught them better."

It was a fearful threat, for Gregory had no means of shielding the unhappy Gallic peasants who dwelt between Langres and Autun, and who under his government had been thriving with cattle and crops. Wolfram spoke, however, more placably. "Come, Herr Bishop, since such they call thee, best let the boy go peaceably—Tullium and Nasium will soon be made over, and thou wilt have him back, taught to ride and handle an ax like a Frank, instead of a puling Roman! Ha! youngling," turning toward Attalus and Baldrik, who both stood by the Bishop, the latter leaning on a stout stick, "wilt come and see a Frankish burg? Thou art a likely fellow," and he fixed his eyes on Baldrik.

"I know a Frank burg well enough," he answered.

"Ha! That's no Roman tongue! What art thou?"

"I am Baldrik, son of Garfried of the Blue Sword," answered the boy, before any one could prevent him from speaking out.

"He is surrendered to my keeping by his father, and has, as thou seest, already received minor orders," Gregory hastened to say, for he saw the Frank's eyes glisten at the thought of the prey so near him.

"A shaveling, eh! That's soon outgrown. Hark you, Herr Bishop, let me take yonder Baldrik youngster with me, then will I leave thy dainty grandson."

Both boys looked up imploringly—Attalus in longing to stay, Baldrik with hope to be restored to the free life he loved, instead of remaining in the cramped clerical and civilized household which with returning health he began to loathe; but Gregory shook his head. "Nay, good Herr Wolfram, that may not be. The boy Baldrik was committed to me as a sacred trust by his father, and I may not let him go out of my hands."

"Sir," Baldrik put himself forward, "I would be glad to go. Thou hast been very good to me, but my leg is well, and I would fain be among bold men and spears and axes once more, and Attalus would never endure the life."

"Thou knowest not what thou ask'st, my child," said Gregory. "Thou art my charge and that of the Church, committed to my trust by thy father. I were guilty and forsworn to part with thee."

"Then I take this one," said Wolfram, stepping toward the boys, and laying his hand on Attalus's shoulder with a grip that made the little fellow shrink and cry out, "O grand father!"

"If it must be so there is no help for it, so thou wilt spare my peasants and my townsmen. Thou wilt swear that he will be restored so soon as Tullium and Nasium are in possession of King Theudebert?"

Wolfram made no difficulty about taking the oath. If it were kept the detention would be short; but whether the towns would be given up was, in the first place, doubtful, and then the good faith of Theudebert; so it was with a failing heart that good Bishop Gregory consented, knowing that the young Roman nobles were selected as the more worthless hostages, in preference to the sons of Frank counts. Yet to yield the child was the only means of preventing his poor, outside the walls, from being ravaged, or the city from being put to tribute, besieged and starved in revenge for his disobedience; nor could he permit his flock thus to suffer, any more than he could yield up Garfried's son to his enemies. He could only give what was his own, much as it cost him to part from his beloved grandson, and to send him to unknown suffering and danger, as well as to break off his education and expose him not only to hardship, but to companionship that might affect the whole course of his life.

It rent the old man's heart, but he was resolute. He invited the guests to stay all night, but Wolfram would not hear of it. It was scarcely noontide, and all he would do was to accept a banquet which Leo was hastily preparing.

(To be continued.)