

debert," cried Attalus, louder than caution would have allowed, but that he was only half awake. "I will ask Hunderik."

The whip came smartly down.

"Hunderik is gone wolf-hunting with King Theudebert," said the fellow, scornfully. "It is his command and my lady's; much we heed such talk—Gaulish serfs are ye all. Come at once, or shall I have to flog thee out, thou tardy, lazy lubber of a coward Roman?"

Attalus looked round, but no one was to be seen, save thralls in even greater fear of Bodo than himself, and he was forced by the terrors of the whip waving over him to rise and come out of the house to the place where the horses were being assembled. A basket of oat-cakes was there, and one was thrown to Attalus, who at first disregarded it, but the slave next to him grinned and advised him not to neglect it, for it was all he would get during the day, except what he might pick up in the forest.

Bodo mounted one of the best horses bare-backed, and called out to the slave not to let Atli lag behind, and then, with another blast of the horn, set forth, the horses following as by well-accustomed instinct, and about ten or twelve of the slaves coming likewise, several of them riding. One of them, who looked as if he were partly negro, scoffed at the boy's endeavor to keep up with the rest, or rather to keep out of the way of blows which cut his heart more than his limbs by the indignity to a free Roman. However, a more good-natured-looking fat fellow, whom he had seen laughing with every one, stopped his horse and said, "Get up here, boy. Hogmane can carry double."

"That he does already," called out one of the others, and there was a good-humored laugh: but Attalus was helped to climb up by the leg of his friend, and they rode on through the forest, the merry slave, Milo, exchanging with his fellows drolleries that Attalus could not understand, but occasionally pausing to ask if he were at his ease, and likewise what he had done to offend the Hausfrau so grievously, and in Gallic Latin which sounded friendly.

"Only talking to Roswitha—showing her how we write and read."

"That will not do," said Milo. "See, now, I lived in a great household at Genabum, where the master had us all to church every morn, and there came a subdeacon day by day to teach the children; but the Franks made a descent on us and put the town to ransom, and I was taken to make up the contribution my master was rated at. A freer life it is, if a rougher, and thou wilt soon get to like it best. One is not troubled with catechists, and prayers and psalms, and fast-days."

Attalus gave a sort of groan of horror. "Poor lad," said Milo, mistaking him, "'tis fast-day with thee, willing or no; but eat up thy oat-cake; never fear—I have a lump of pork in my

wallet, and thou shalt have thy share, and I will show thee how to set snares for rabbits or quails."

"Oh! thou art good," exclaimed, Attalus, a little diverted from his dismay at Milo's willing relapse into heathenism in his comfort at finding a friend, whose broad well-fleshed chest was a much more comfortable pillow than he had known before; and he was glad to venture on eating his oat-cake, which, tough and hard as it was, occupied his teeth and his throat as far as the horses went—namely, to an open space between the wooded hillsides, where they were to feed and disport themselves till nearly sundown.

The thralls were to be posted at intervals around the space, partly to keep the horses from over-running too much at once and spoiling it for the time for future pasture, and partly to prevent their getting into the surrounding forests, where they might not only be lost, but might become the prey of wolves and bears.

All this Milo explained to Attalus while taking up his station on the borders of the juniper and stunted birch that marked the limits on their side, while the horses, with one accord, trotted down to drink at the little brook. Milo was an easy-going, good-natured, careless fellow, to whom, as long as he had plenty of food and could lie down in the sun, all matters of religion or of freedom were alike, though he would have preferred belonging to a civilized Roman, chiefly because the language was natural to him, and he was better fed, clothed, and housed; but good city manners were a trouble to him, and the lessons of the catechist a still greater one. However, he was sorry for the little Roman boy, knowing what he had lost, and liked, too, to speak with him the odd mixed tongue which in time became French.

So Attalus was not utterly solitary. No one minded his being with Milo, nor indeed what became of him, so long as he was out of Roswitha's way. Moreover, as most boys would do, he had lost a good many of the dainty habits to which he had been bred, so that the absence of the bath and of clean or even whole clothes ceased to cause him personal discomfort. The guardianship of the horses did not prove altogether such a difficult matter, for the herd never strayed far away from their leader—a great powerful gray, who would never be caught nor allow any one to mount him but Hunderik. To turn him back from wherever he wished to go, always followed by the whole herd, required the full force of the keepers united; but he had a great deal too much sense often to make such an attempt, and when he did it was a serious and dangerous business to oppose the stampede. Moreover, he knew quite as well as the herdsman when it was time to go home, and never waited for the horn to summon him.

(To be continued.)