

## FOR THE WHITE CHRIST

Doubly has he earned the tree,—the mire-death. Yet I have spared his life; I have shown mercy."

"It is not for mercy, but for justice that I ask, King of the Franks," replied Olvir; and then, as the thought of his little princess came upon him, his voice broke into despairing appeal: "Hear me, lord king! Be just to the liegeman whom you once honored. Do not send me from your realm wolfshead, that those who hate me may jeer my name, and my friends listen to the scoffing with sealed lips. I will go; I will go gladly, lord king; only, take from me the shame of your dooming, and bless the parting liegeman with a king's gift,—the hand of his betrothed."

"By the King—"

"Hear me, dear lord, I beg you! by the sword in your hand, by this ring on my wrist, gift of Hildegarde—of Hildegarde who so loved my little princess!—I swear to you, dear lord, that I had no part—"

"Do not heed him, King of the Franks!" hissed Fastrada. "Look upon this cruel blade, my lord,—the knife which pierced the feeble greybeard! What justice for the murderer? What mercy for the traitor? I demand vengeance upon my father's betrayer. He shall sink in the slime, or the plunging horses rend him asunder! Vengeance!"

"Go, Olvir!" muttered the king, thickly; "go—before I forget that I once loved you."

A gasping sob burst from the Northman. Karl could not have struck a blow more cruel. The stricken man turned slowly about and passed from the chamber, groping his way as though blinded. The king and the scholar stared after him, hushed and motionless. Not until he was gone did they heed that the queen had glided out by the bower doorway. Then Alcuin began to pray aloud, and the king