

master and the hunters, with spears, arrows, and snares, were bringing down a miscellaneous collection of flesh, fowl, and fish, so much that all one day had to be spent in flaying and plucking the spoil, while a few of the women, at Hunderik's express command, were grinding wheat for the flour for the cakes, and their children were seeking for eggs.

And a feast it was! It was midsummer and the weather was cloudless, so there was no difficulty in placing the tables outside the house in the great yard, which Leo had contrived with difficulty should be cleaned up for the occasion. Boards were spread, supported on trestles. Their covering, well known to Roman use, they could not have, but nobody missed it, especially as bowls of strawberries, loaves of bread, rounds of cheese, and lengths of butter were placed on green leaves and ranged at short intervals along the table wherever the dishes were not to go. The dishes were, in a few cases, of silver, the rest rude crocks; the plates were trenchers, and there were bowls of various sizes and materials—silver, wood, brass, tin, or crockery—for the liquids.

The company began to pour in—great harsh-faced warriors, with tall helmets and tawny beards; older men, with white beards and streaming hoary locks, limping and leaning on their spears; young "theudes" in all the fair glory of Teutonic beauty, a few darker ones in whom the Belgian blood was mixed. Little boys ran about their fathers, or herded in groups, and a band of women had got together, shining, like their husbands, with gold chains and embroidered breastplates, and all, except a few worn and withered old hags, fair and handsome, as if there were no middle age. The number was far greater than the tables would hold, and the ladies dined apart with Bernhild, and most of them especially the elders, sympathized with her wrongs, and agreed that they would not suffer their rule to be invaded by a miserable Gallic black-faced slave.

Leo had some experience of Frankish appetites and had prepared accordingly, but he watched with amazement the quantities devoured by this voracious party, who seemed never to have done sending for fresh relays of pork, beef, mutton, hares and rabbits, and all kinds of winged fowl. Happily Leo and his assistants were able to respond to all, sending the more elaborately dressed meats, really fit for Roman banquets, to those who could appreciate them, and others to the ruder tastes.

Wine and beer flowed in the same proportion, and a good many guests sank down and slept long before they were conducted home by their slaves or their wives in the light of the ensuing morning.

Hunderik was fully satisfied. Every one had declared that such a banquet had never before been held in the mountains, and they complimented Hunderik on the possession of such a slave.

Yet more than one acute Burgundian shook his head, and declared that such a gifted slave would not have been sold into the mountains for nothing, and advised their host to be on the lookout against treachery.

The ladies spoke even more strongly. They agreed with Bernhild that he could be there for no good purpose. They peeped at his dark face, and shuddered. Such as had floating notions of Christianity said he was no doubt in league with the Evil One; another, more of a Pagan, declared that Loki had sent him from Nifelheim! and the old lady who was reputed to be the wisest, and a century back would have been honored as a Velleda, or prophetess, seriously warned the anxious housewife that this blackamoor might have been sent by the perfidious Romans to poison her husband.

Hunderik laughed at all she told him, but it had the effect of making him for a time watchful over Leo, who found he could not stir without Bodo or some one else watching him and making sure of all the ingredients he put into the messes he prepared for his master, also observing with whom he conversed. He therefore thought it wiser to utter no word of Attalus, nor to endeavor to see him till time should have laid all suspicions to rest.

Indeed, Attalus himself was out of reach, for all the younger horses not in use had been sent out to the more distant pastures, where a sort of camp had been arranged to watch over them, and in huts formed of turf or branches of trees Milo, Attalus, and others spent their time in preventing them from straying too far, or falling a prey to any beasts of the forest. They catered for themselves a good deal with snares, bows and arrows, and hunting-spears, but one or two servants were sent once a week to Hundingburg for leathern bottles of beer and cakes of rye bread.

Attalus enjoyed this life of hunting and of freedom; he was happy with Milo and with the others who had not forgotten Gilchrist's teaching. Daily they met, and chanted together, morning and evening, their hymns and prayers, and were fairly happy together. Only now and then, if the weather was bad a fit of homesickness would come over the lad of longing for his grandfather's face, his uncle's words, and the petting of his playmate Leo beside the stove; or even for something nearer at hand a little talk with the gentle Roswitha. In general, he felt as if he had been a whole lifetime on the heath herding the horses, and as if nothing else were before him.

*(To be continued.)*