

him all his furs and skins, and the cattle that his shepherds had driven up, and even an able-bodied young slave, and giving his pledge for two more swine of next season.

CHAPTER XX.

DOMESTIC CAVILS.

Leo was mounted behind one of the slaves who had brought Hunderik's skins and wool for sale to Treves. He asked no questions on the way through the forest and mountains, but looked warily about him and studied the route.

In due time they arrived at Hundingburg, where wife, children, followers, dogs, and goats all turned out to meet the master. Little Hundbert was looking sturdy and healthy, and cried out for joy when his father lifted him up. Bernhild and her two daughters received a cursory greeting, and Bernhild's first inquiry was, "had he brought her the scarlet robe he had promised?"

"I have brought thee a better thing, housewife," was his answer. "Here is a man who can serve up a leg of an old cow so that you would take it for the haunch of a prime stag, and make you broth that would serve the heroes in Valhalla. Here, Leo, what call they thee? To him thou must give the charge of thy caldron and thy hearth."

Bernhild burst into angry tears. "Was ever such charge given to an honorable housewife? Leave my hearth to a foul, black-visaged Gallic slave, indeed!"

"Yea, and condescend to learn his ways, or it shall be the worse for thee. Thou mayst be glad enough that it is not a fresh wife that I have brought home. Alfrude, the daughter of Wolfram, is fairer and fresher."

Bernhild began to weep and exclaim what a true and faithful wife she had been, and Leo was glad enough to fall back from this domestic scene while Bodo showed him the corner of the great building where he would sleep upon a heap of fern and heather, and bestow the rug and the very few clothes that he had brought with him. Of Attalus he saw nothing, and he durst not ask. He was called up by and by to partake of the leavings from Bernhild's great caldron, and it must be confessed that he thought Hunderik excused for his objections.

Other large bowlfuls were carried out to the various servants and herdsmen who came in from the hills with their cattle, and as Leo stood at the door he fancied that he had a glimpse of Attalus, riding home a colt as the other horses were driven into their enclosure, but he could not make sure—the figure was taller, and the hair so unlike the delicately curled and combed locks in which poor old Gola had taken such pride. Soon he was called up to make a bowl of the broth eatable

for Hunderik, while Bernhild sulked apart, and banged all the stools and bits of armor that fell in her way, muttering, and truly, that hunger used to prepare her husband to think her cookery quite good enough for him before he learned to go and gormandize among the greedy Gauls and Romans.

She called off her two daughters and all her women with her, and looked on contemptuously from a distance.

Presently Hunderik, smacking his lips, called on her to taste the soup that Leo had cleared and flavored for him, and the ill-baked and kneaded lumps of dough that had been converted into something crisp and fresh.

She tossed her head, saying she wanted no Gallic dainties, and she supposed that he meant his son to be as feeble and tender as the Romans—for Hundbert was sitting on his knee with a little cake in his hand, swallowing alternate spoonfuls from the bowl, and exclaiming, "Good, good! More, more!" after each.

Hunderik vouchsafed only a savage growl at the perverseness of women, conveying a warning to Bernhild to take care not to provoke him too far.

Presently he called to Leo and said, "Canst thou dress me a Roman dinner, such as I have eaten at Paris and Soissons?"

"I can send up a feast that would serve an emperor. I can dress a banquet with any one," said Leo, who knew that modesty would not succeed.

"Sunday is four days hence," returned Hunderik, after reckoning on his fingers. "On that day my friends and my kindred come to feast with me. Send them up such a banquet that they may be amazed and say, 'We have found nothing so good or so grand at the King's own table.'"

Leo bowed and said, "Let my master provide me plenty of meat, especially of winged fowl, and he shall be fully obeyed."

For the next few days Leo was closely employed. He judged it better neither by word nor look to endeavor to establish any understanding with Attalus until he had gained the confidence and favor of his master; so after having once satisfied himself that Attalus was a strong and healthy lad he took no further notice of him, but applied himself to the sending up of Hunderik's Roman feast—no easy matter in the absence of all the apparatus to which he was accustomed as absolutely necessary to his art, and the difficulty was all the greater as the few vessels and implements that the place possessed were sullenly withheld from him by the mistress of the establishment.

Male slaves were, however, at his disposal, and with their help he managed to contrive ovens in the earth, and even burn wood into charcoal sufficiently for his purposes, while his