

FOR THE WHITE CHRIST

On the wall hung his great axe. He plucked it down, and turned about, with flaming eyes, as Count Worad rushed into the king's chamber, in the lead of a score of warriors.

But then the king's voice rang out, clear and joyful: "Stay your hand, viking-priest! And you, Count of Metz, take away your men. There's now no need of them."

"Father!" cried Rothada. "You smile! He is no longer outlaw!"

Karl drew her to him, and stood stroking her soft tresses, while the wondering warriors filed out of the king's chamber. When Worad, crestfallen and bewildered, had followed his men, Karl bent over his daughter.

"Do you, then, love him so much?" he murmured.

"More than life! God be praised, you've listened to him!"

"I shall not soon forget how near I came to losing my Dane hawk, — and he flown hither to warn me of deadly peril! Let the traitors give thanks to Heaven for unmerited mercy. They will have a mild judge."

Olvir shook his head. "My heart leaps with joy that I have won again the friendship of the world-hero. Yet I ask two things only, — let my lord king give me my betrothed to wife, and bid me God-speed on my homeward faring."

"The maiden is yours, kinsman. But we cannot part either with her or you."

"Dear lord, I speak with clear vision. The heretic cannot sit in peace among those who bend to the Bishop of Rome; and more, it is best that we should go, both for ourselves and for the queen. I am weary of strife. My heart longs for the iron cliffs of my home land, for the salt billows roaring among the skerries, for the still waters of the fiord. The viking stifles in this sea-less land."

"Can nothing stay you, Olvir? Think what you ask!"