

THE COOK AND THE CAPTIVE;
OR,
ATTALUS THE HOSTAGE.

BY CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

CHAPTER X.—*Continued*



LL the others followed him obediently except the young half-grown colts, who seemed occasionally to take a fit of restiveness, or thinking for themselves, and wanted to start on fresh ground near the marsh or woodland, where they would have been bogged or perhaps lost and devoured by the wolves. These required watching, but were easily headed back by any one on the alert. Attalus was never in any real charge, and was allowed to do as he pleased and keep with Milo, who was very kind to him, and showed him how to snare the wild game, and even to shoot it with rude bows and arrows of their own construction; and when brought down they plucked or skinned the creatures and roasted them on sticks or by burying them amid stones in the earth, keeping the hare and rabbit skins and spreading them out to dry, so as to have a store to make winter coats. It was not exactly Leo's cookery, but Attalus really enjoyed it quite as much or more, and during this summer-time he was not all unhappy; in fact, more and more of the Roman was dropping from him as he grew more roughened by the hardy life he was leading and the companions with whom he more or less consorted on the heath, where the pasture was changed from time to time under Bodo's directions. Attalus, like the other herdsmen, slept in the shed where the horses were sheltered at night, riding barebacked to and from the feeding ground on whichever steed would let him mount. He was ragged and dirty, and, worst of all, he was fast getting hardened to forget not only his learning, but his faith. Wakened by the horn he rushed out to secure a horse and a lump of food without the prayers, which he forgot all day; and at night when he rode home he was so sleepy that he only remained awake long enough to devour the rude meal Milo secured for him; and he was on his way to become as great a heathen as the Franks around.

As long as he was with Roswitha and Valhild he had felt bound to show himself a Roman and a Christian, and he had felt the stimulus of the elder girl's admiration and real desire to learn the faith. But now he was cut off from her and hardly ever even saw her—going out in the early morning and coming home tired late at night, and never supping or sleeping in the great family building—there was nothing to keep him to higher thoughts. The free open-air life was making him grow tall and strong,

and the boy nature was coming out in him and swallowing up the character that home care had fostered, so that he cared more for riding and catching game than for anything else, except, perhaps, holding his own among the other lads and proving to them that a Gallo Roman was no coward.

CHAPTER XI.

GOLA'S RANSOM.

At Langres there was daily prayer, both public and private, for the poor little exile. He was mentioned each day when the sick, the oppressed, and the captives were prayed for at the Holy Eucharist, and his grandfather, his uncle, and all who loved him in the household made their prayers that he might be kept safely and restored without harm to body or soul.

The first that was heard of him was one cold winter's day, when to the open door of the court of the house of Bishop Gregory there came a Jew, followed by three or four slaves. He bowed low to the doorkeeper, and demanded whether the great and clement lord of the household would deal with him for a useful and accomplished servant, or for one strong to bear burdens.

"My master never purchases a slave," answered the porter, looking out of the little door of his lodge, cut in the thickness of the brick wall, where he was enjoying the first pan of charcoal embers of the season.

"Marcus, Marcus, dost not know me?" cried a lamentable voice.

"Gola's voice!" exclaimed the porter, emerging now, and beholding a wretched and forlorn-looking figure, his once comfortable woollen tunic and trousers reduced to rags, his sandals worn to shreds so that his feet were bleeding, a beard long, and, like his hair, quite white, instead of only grizzled, and his face, once all roundness and good-nature, sallow, haggard, and lean, with the Moorish yellow tint showing so that it was like old parchment.

"Gola! is it thou?" cried Marcus again. "Poor Gola, how camest thou here, and where is the young Attalus?"

"Alas! alas! Heaven only knows," cried poor Gola, clasping his hands and lifting them up, while tears ran down the deep furrows in his cheeks. "I was rent from him in the night by the brutal Franks and sold to this—this—this—" He paused, afraid to utter the opprobrious epithet upon his tongue, and the Jew took up the word: "I bought him from the Frankish noble, Hunderik, for a sword and breast-plate worth ten pounds weight in silver, paid down on the spot. I have maintained him in sickness and health for these four months, and I cannot think of letting him go for less than seven."

"The Frank had no right to sell, what did