

THE COOK AND THE CAPTIVE;

OR,

ATTALUS THE HOSTAGE.

BY CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

All this lasted till the meal was over, and then Garfried told what had brought him. "Know, most holy Bishop, that my wife, Adelhild, seeing me in great danger of death after King Theuderic's raid, made a vow that her next child should be dedicated to God, St. Denis, and St. Martin, if I recovered. She hoped, poor woman, that it might have been a maid-child, when no scath would have been done. Forgive me for talking as an unchastened heathen," he exclaimed, crossing himself; "but there stands the child, my son Baldrik, and I have brought him hither to ask of you to foster him, give him the tonsure, and bring him up to fulfil his mother's vow and be a worthy priest."

Baldrik, though he knew not the language, knew well enough why his father had brought him, and as he saw the Bishop's eyes fixed on him his fair cheeks became dyed of a deep red.

"We will do our best, with God's good help, to train him," returned the Bishop. "Hath he manifested any vocation?"

"He hath known to what he is destined," replied the father; "but for the rest he hath been like other boys, though not untoward. You, I see, have a young lad in training."

"My beloved daughter's son," replied Gregory; "but I am not wholly decided as to his destiny. I wait to see him show what is his mind when he is less childish. He will rejoice in a companion."

"I thought he was shaven," said Garfried, "but I trow it is only the Roman fashion. You will give my boy the tonsure ere I leave him with you?"

"If it be your will," replied Gregory.

"To tell the truth," said Garfried, lowering his voice, "he may be the safer thus. At any time Theudebert or Hildebert may recollect that I and my boys bear the blood of King Gondebald of Burgundy and of Odin, and if they should cut us off—which they would not do save at their own peril and loss"—and he grasped his dagger-hilt—"then would the life of the youngest, his dead mother's darling, be safe, even as Chlodwald's was when his brethren were slain."

The elder son, Friedbald, who could follow the words, muttered, "Better die as a brave man than live as a priest."

"Sayest thou so, my son!" said Gregory in the Frank tongue. "Mayhap as much courage

is needed by the priest as by the soldier. Come hither, my son," he added to Baldrik, in the same language, laying his hand on the young head, while the boy shuddered at the first touch on his fair hair. "Nay, I am not going to shear these bright locks to-night. Wilt thou come and be comrade and brother with my Attalus?"

"My father says I must. My mother has vowed me," returned Baldrik.

"Thou art obedient. It is well. Take him, Attalus," and he laid the two boys' hands in each other. "Use him as thy friend and brother."

"Let him show me the horses and the boarspears and axes," cried Attalus, with glancing eyes.

"Ah!" put in Garfried, "I was about to say that some of the serfs, as I rode in, when they saw the sucking-pigs on my men's saddles, told us that the old boar and sow were making great havoc of their crops, and it would be a good deed to slay them. I thought, if you gave me hospitality for another day, that I would go in quest of them."

"It will be a deed of charity," said Gregory.

So in the early morning there was a great scene of bustle. Friedbald went with his father as a matter of course, and Baldrik pleaded hard to have one chase more, while Attalus entreated his grandfather to let him go for once and see the enterprise. He hesitated, for a boar-hunt was a particularly dangerous sport, especially when there was the chance of meeting an infuriated sow; but the boy was wild to go, and when Leo came up respectfully to beg leave to go out with the hunters, otherwise he was sure that the daintiest morsels would never be scientifically cut off, and that the bristles would never be secured for the painters and binders of the precious books, and when he further promised to take the utmost care of the young Lord Attalus, Gregory consented, on condition that his grandson promised to keep close to Leo, and not to run into danger with Baldrik and Friedbald.

Attalus had a mule, for everyone learned to ride, as it was the only way of moving about, and Gregory with his whole household were wont to move from one town of his see to another. Of course the Burgundian guests were all well mounted, and Attalus begged and prayed to be allowed to have one of the horses, old as it was, which had belonged to his grandfather's days as senator; but the ways even of old Lartius were thought to be too dangerous, and he was refused.

Even then it may be feared that he would have persuaded Niger, the slave who had charge of the stables, if Leo had not come up and absolutely refused to take charge of him on anything but his own animal, named Jugurtha in derision of its pace.