

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

BY CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)



ATTALUS only half heard the rather lengthy words of the good Bishop, at least he only took in that he must either ask the Greek's pardon or sup on dry bread, and all the pride of his Roman forefathers was rising in him to declare that he had rather live on bread and water all the rest of his days than humble himself to one whom he considered little better than a slave, nay, to whom he greatly preferred the slave Leo. He durst not make any answer to his grandfather, but he turned on his heel and went off into the farther end of the great dining-hall, and sat himself down on the mosaic pavement.

Bishop Gregory sighed; but there were guests to attend to, and it might be best to leave him to himself. The pilgrim with whom Philetus had been engaged was brought forward, walking very lame. He was a small, wiry, red-haired man, with his hair cut in a crescent shape, in the distinctive fashion of the Celtic churches, and wearing a coarse, scanty, reddish-brown garment, and he spoke Latin, but with an accent and pronunciation so different from that of the educated Gallo-Romans that it was no wonder that he had not been at first understood. He was on a pilgrimage to Rome, whither almost every Christian of much enterprise or desire to learn made his way in those days, to see the tombs of the martyrs, behold the full glory of worship, and study the faith as it was impossible to do in the barbarian lands.

He had much to tell which all were anxious to hear of the state of the Church of Ireland, now come to the second generation of its conversion. He looked about with great surprise at Gregory on his chair inlaid with ivory, and his attendants of clergy, priests, deacons, and subdeacons.

"This is a king!" he said, "a wealthier king than we have. No such bishops have we. Ours dwell in the cells of the monasteries, and go hither and thither as the abbot bids them."

"The better for the bishop," observed Bishop Gregory; "but is it also the better for his people not to look to their spiritual head as the chief authority?"

"Ah! but 'tis the abbot who is the father and has the land. Such monasteries as you have here! They are castles and forts."

"'Tis our need against the barbarians."

"And what could the barbarians do at their worst but help you to the better keeping of your vow?"

"His monasteries are but clusters of huts," suggested one of the guests.

"The better for them. Their huts all stand about their church and their general kitchen and eating-room; for the rest, each man to himself. What can be better for their prayer and meditation?"

"Oh, then they do live in community like our own monks?"

Tetricus, afraid, perhaps, of a dispute on the comparative merits of the two systems, asked whether the guest had ever seen the great St. Patrick.

The face lighted up with a look of love and joy, transforming the worn, plain, and freckled features, as he told how, when quite a little boy, his mother had taken him to the saint in his cell at Armagh to be baptized, and how the holy man had asked the child if he knew why he came.

"To become the servant of Christ my Lord," I answered," said the pilgrim, "so they tell me, though I remember only the long beard and tender eyes of the ancient man; but he replied, 'Servant, then, of His thou shalt be, little one,' and he named me Gilchrist, for *gil* in our tongue signifies servant. My mother ever kept up in me the memory that a servant of Christ must be servant of all men, and seek to take the lowest place, and she objected not I should leave the kingship of our sept to mine uncle, and seek the cells of Armagh."

"Am I mistaken?" asked Bishop Gregory. "Methought I had been told that Saal—no, a place with a name like holy Paul's Jewish name, or that of the Israelite king—was the last home of the blessed Patrick?"

"The holy father is right," returned Gilchrist; "Sabrethall, or, as we call it, Saul, was his best-beloved resting-place, and it was thence that he departed to paradise; but he had already chosen Armagh to be the chief see of Ireland—a fair spot on the Ridge of the Willow Tree. Will my lord hear how he gained it?"

"Any deed of St. Patrick is worth hearing," returned Gregory.

"The hill belonged to a chief name Daire, who set store by it and would not give it, but offered a spot in the valley. A day or two later he sent the holy man a great caldron holding three firkins. '*Gratias agam*' (I will give thanks), said the saint. So Daire asked the messenger what said the Bishop. 'He said naught but "*Gratzacham*,"' replied the kerne. 'What a fool the fellow must be,' said Daire, 'to say naught but "*Gratzacham*" to such a kettle as mine. 'Go, slaves, and take it away.' He was obeyed, and the saint merely turned his head and again said his two words of thanks. 'What said he?' asked the chief. 'What, "*Gratzacham*" when I give, and "*Gratzacham*" again when I take away? He shall have it back again.' A third time the holy