

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

I scorn the outward deity of men,
The sovereign of the skies, the image
cold
Of a dull terror and barbaric thought;
—But to the infinite sublime within,
The essence of the human soul I have,
The deity that honest manhood makes,
To this I yield with ready heart and
hand.

CHAPTER I.

It was an out-of-the-way place. On three sides of it were huge fragmentary mountains, the tallest of which, twenty miles away, swept up into flashing crowns of snow. To the eastward, it was open to the plains that rolled far off in pale verdure to the horizon. It was called Golden Throne. The precious metal had been found in great abundance there at one time, and thousands had swarmed to it and gone away. Only a few were now left. They could make a comfortable living, and that satisfied them.

Two men sat talking after their day's work, on the trunk of a fallen tree.

"I tell you," said one, "I haven't any faith in men. Give 'em a chance, and they'll cheat you out of your last cent. I've been all over the world, and that's my creed."

"A harsh creed," said the other. "Your own unbelief helps to make men look mean."

"Look at the folks here. How many can you trust? There's Gooch toiling like a slave for gold, and he prays every night. He'd kill me, if he could and not be found out. He's deacon of a church somewhere Down East. When he gets rich, he'll go back and put a new bell in the steeple, and everybody will laud him to the skies. That's the inside and the outside of human nature."

"It may be the outside, but I hardly think it's altogether the inside. It's made out of better stuff than you imagine."

"I don't imagine much about it. I take it as it is."

"There, I differ with you again, Charlie. My experience teaches me that goodness is in the majority."

"A pretty slim majority. You are younger than I am, and that's why you are so hopeful."

"I think I always shall be hopeful, no matter how old I grow. It's in my temperament, I suppose."

"And your bringing up, too, I guess. I was brought up Orthodox and taught total depravity and regeneration. I only half learned my lesson, though. I have found plenty of total depravity and mighty little regeneration, even among church folks. In fact, the folks that are not born again seem to have the best of it. But there is not much to choose. The devil has got the go in this world and he will keep it. I used to go to Sun-

day-school and say my prayers, and listen to long sermons and read the Bible through, I don't know how many times, for the sake of a prize; but it did no good. I never got converted; and, if I had been, I should only have fared the worse. I've never seen a really converted man yet. If he improves in one thing; he grows bad in another: if he stops swearing, he takes to lying and stealing. That's religion, so far as I've seen anything about it."

"Your Orthodox life didn't do you much good, I see. I never tried it, and so haven't made a failure. My father and mother had no religion, and I was never bothered with it. I never went to Sunday-school or church. I used to go hunting and fishing, or stay at home and read. So I enjoyed life, and have ever since; and not being taught total depravity, I have seen little of it. I have not sought regeneration, being born well enough the first time, I have always been satisfied with this world, and never hankered after heaven. So far as I can understand it, regeneration is only putting on a new coat of paint; and it dries up mighty quick. I have never expected much of it. I like things as nature made them."

"Well, you've been more lucky than I, Bill. If I'd had less orthodoxy and more sense in my bringing-up, I might have had more confidence in men. Orthodoxy cultivates the devil in one, and it makes him see a devil in every other. I suppose that is the reason why it's so popular, because it puts such an emphasis on all the mean things in the universe. At any rate, I hate it; but at the same time in teaching that all men are born sinners it hits the truth."

"I can understand that orthodoxy being unnatural gives you unnatural and barbaric ideas of men and women. My father was an infidel. He took human nature as it was. He never tried to make his children think that it was worse or better than it is. He brought us in contact with facts and left us to judge for ourselves. Of course, I have found the world to be both good and bad. I expected this, and have not been materially disappointed one way or the other; and, on the whole, I like this world."

"Well, my father and the minister and all the deacons taught me that this world is a humbug, and I've only learned the lesson too well. Their heaven is a humbug and their hell is a lie; but, when they say all men are born full of iniquity, I am bound to believe it, for my experience is that way."

"Perhaps it wouldn't have been that way, if you had started with little more genuine faith in things."

"I suppose orthodoxy gave me a

twist, and destroyed what little faith I might have had; but I can't help it. It is a cursed education for a man to have so much hell and devil driven into him from infancy. It makes one a perfect skeptic, if he has any real feeling; for things are bad enough without being made worse by a theological bugbear."

"I agree with you; the faith that religion gives is very poor material. It's the reflex of a damnable unbelief. It is based upon utter distrust. It is the shadow of a shadow. I've never had anything to believe in but nature, and men and women as they really are. I've had very little to do with the church, and have avoided the saints; and so, on the whole, I have come to pretty good faith in men and things."

"Well, I was taught that there was no hope in nature, but in a something above and beyond nature, though the minister couldn't exactly tell what. I've found that that something is all nonsense, or the biggest devil of all; and so you see now I have nothing to depend on. God has slipped away and men and women tumble with him."

"I hope you'll work out of it."

"I don't think I shall. The disease is in men, and I shall never get rid of it. As I say, see the folks we come in contact with here, —broken-down ministers, rascally lawyers, played-out politicians, money-worshiping deacons,—what a muddle they make! Here we see them as they really are, and a devilish peck they appear."

"Wait and see. You'll come across something good yet, even in this wild country."

"Well, I think you are pretty good; and here comes Paddie John. I rather like him."

Paddie John was a slouchy, queer individual, with a certain air of manliness and culture about him. He had been educated as a Roman Catholic priest, but had early drifted out of superstition. He had preached somewhat in the Unitarian church, but had found that its ecclesiasticism was almost as embarrassing as that of Rome with less splendor and impressiveness. He realized that he couldn't be himself, and so he quitted the ministry entirely. His classical education was useless for any business purposes; and so he floated round, a kind of brilliant wreck, although he really had fine ability. Sometimes he was in rags; and sometimes, by a lucky stroke, he could make a very elegant appearance. Just now, he was under the weather, and had come to Golden Throne to pick up, if possible, a little money. They give queer names at such places, and somehow or other he was called "Paddie, John." His earnings at present were slim, and his appearance di-

lapidated. But he took things easy, and enjoyed his wild life with a good deal of relish. He took considerable liking to Bill and Charlie, the two characters already introduced, a couple of well-educated New England boys.

"Hullo, Paddie," said Charlie, "are you going to camp? If so, I'll step along with you."

"I'm not bound to any place in particular," said Paddie, "but, if you are for the camp, I'm for the same. I've just been out to hunt for some new specimens of butterflies. I've found one. Isn't that brilliant? Look at the colors," and he held the beautiful insect out in the palm of his hand.

"That is something new," said Charlie. "I don't think I've seen that before. What shall you call it?"

"It shall be nameless evermore. What's the use of a name? Names have been the curse of the world, and destroyed the reality. Why should I label this butterfly? The label would cover it all up; and the world would study the label, and not the butterfly."

"You're right, Paddie. We'll take the butterfly just as he is. We'll know just as much about him, as if he had a cognomen as long as the catechism."

"I guess you'll want a name before you get through," said Bill. "You fellows revolt against everything. You'll be opposed to breathing after awhile."

"Of course I shall," said Paddie, "or else I couldn't die. But I'll stick to it as long as I live. I'm orthodox there, anyway."

"Natural, you mean," said Bill. "You confound everything with orthodoxy."

"How can we help it?" said Paddie. "We were born orthodox, and to give it up was like giving up our mother."

"Then you must be born again," said Bill, "and have nature for your mother."

"That's it," said Paddie; "but nature forbids civilization. To be natural, we must be savages."

"Oh, no," said Bill. "Civilization, I grant, has to a certain extent been manufactured. Religion has made it artificial. But there is a natural civilization which is real growth, and that in the end will be most beautiful. Orthodoxy has not only perverted nature; it has perverted civilization, until it has made the educated man almost a fool."

(To Be Continued.)

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