

## GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

"Yes" said Paddie. "I studied for years, and what did it amount to when I came to the real tussle with life? I can't earn my bread and butter with it. I have a diploma and yet I doubt if I am worth as much to the world as this butterfly; and I stand ashamed by the side of many a rude clod-hopper, and wish I could handle the pick as well as he. The veriest savage can beat me in the struggle for existence. Why shouldn't I revolt against everything, and go straight to nature."

"It's the best thing you can do," said Bill. "Stick to the butterfly, and let the name go. We can't set things right in a minute. Good-night. I must hurry to my ranch."

"You have a palace to go to, compared to our dens," said Charlie, "and I don't wonder that you are in a hurry, so good-night."

## CHAPTER II.

Paddie John and Charlie sauntered back to the settlement. "What unfortunates we are, both of us, to have been trained as we have,—never to be natural, but always artificial," said Charlie. "What a luxury of thought and feeling Bill has, of which we can hardly have a conception; for orthodoxy has rendered us incapable! Even though we are free in thought, it still sticks to us, in our very bones."

"Yes we are maimed children," said John. "I don't expect to be perfectly well. We have lost our fortune, and henceforth must be wanderers."

"What a terrible process it is—this unmaking of ourselves!"

"Yes, it leaves us lying round about loose, with hardly any consistent faculty; and the whole world seems to be in about the same condition."

"I wonder if any recovery is possible, or if things have got to go to the devil anyway?"

"I don't bother myself. I leave it to evolution. Meanwhile I am going to study insects and dig for gold. In that way, I may do something for myself."

"I don't like to leave things so, but I guess I'll have to, and take care of number one."

"What success have you had?"

"Oh, not much. The veins seem to be worked out about here. Yet it looks rich; and I shouldn't wonder if we struck something some time. Really, I'd like to be rich; I've tumbled about the world a good deal, and I find that money is the chief blessing. It is a friend that never fails."

"I don't care much about it. If I could have a bottle of wine every day, and a little bread and cheese, I'd be happy."

"I see you are not an idealist."

"I am. That is what made me an infidel. Of course I enjoyed the

old church, and I think that some time or other one must have been perfectly happy in it but now it is jejune. The daylight has killed it."

"But how did you come to see daylight? All your family are still of the church, and your nation seems to be doomed to it for ever."

"Yes, Ireland clings to it as to a mother. I don't wonder. The church has been kind to my native land, and really, if I were to go back to christianity, I'd go back to the old Catholic church. It has no more superstitions than the rest of the churches, and it's much more comprehensive. It allows play for human nature. It tries to satisfy all wants. It is deeply poetical while Protestantism is not. It is only dogmatic. Why, I thought I could be free in the Unitarian church, but I couldn't. If I didn't say just such and such things, I had to take it. I got sick of addressing my prayers every Sunday to the congregation, and wanted to drop off occasionally for a rest, but they wouldn't let me. I had to keep right on. They could listen to the driest prayer complacently, but they wouldn't listen for a moment to its being omitted. So I had to leave the church entirely."

"I never could think of being a minister," said Charlie. "I'd as soon be a parrot in a cage. They are slaves, the whole of 'em. I'd rather dig here, and live in a hole in the ground."

"I'd rather study butterflies than their confounded theology. How I hate the whole thing! What a curse it has been to my country! Ireland would be free to-day, if she could have snapped her fingers at the priest. There never can be liberty with superstition."

"There's nothing but failure; for men will always be superstitious, and so the king and priest will always reign. Come in. We'll take a bit of drink together before bedtime."

Charley lived in a dug-out. It was as comfortable as anything, he said, and wouldn't burn down. He lighted the candle, and they sat by the old table on a couple of boxes. The demijohn and pipes and tobacco were handy.

They sipped a little, and dreamily smoked.

"I am about as happy here as anywhere," said John. "I like this old hat and boots, and I like the fit of my clothes, and I have plenty of ventilation. See what a hole I tore today."

"We have nothing to bother us here," said Charlie. "We are kings, because we don't care a snap for anybody. We can be as dirty and ragged as we please."

"That's the luxury of it. I'd not care to exchange places with any one. A millionaire couldn't be more independent. However, I never thought of this, when I was young. What dreams I used to have when I believed that the church

was the home of everything beautiful, and just fitted to make the world happy!"

"Well, I never dreamed much," said Charlie. "I always was a practical chap. I lived on a farm in New England, and we had to work hard. There wasn't much chance for poetry, and what poetry there might have been was knocked out of us by our religion. I can't say, on the whole, that I'd choose existence."

"Oh, I'd choose it in a minute, anywhere, under any form," said John, with true Irish fervor. "All I want is to live. Why, I'd be happy even if I was only a worm of the dust."

"I'd hardly be happy, if I was a king upon a throne," said Charlie. "Life is a grim sort of a thing under any circumstances."

"Why don't you die, then?"

"Oh, I shall when the time comes, and very gladly too. But fate has put me here, and fate must take me away. I have no right to interfere with fate."

"You believe in fate, then?"

"Yes, I do, in a dark, iron fate, that holds me in its pitiless grasp as if I were an insect."

"Well, I don't believe in anything really. I don't think it pays to have any faith, not even in life itself. We must simply enjoy it. If a man asked me if I believed in my own existence, I'd say no. I don't know what the logical consequence of such an assumption would be. It would be safer to deny it. I don't want anything to do with logic only with poetry. Now, poetry don't need any premises. Poetry only deals in ideals, and I have plenty of them."

"I guess you have, and in that have the advantage of me. You see a world of beauty even in a butterfly's wing."

"Indeed I do," cried John, enthusiastically, "and in a bit of stone or blade of grass. Just look at this butterfly. Is anything richer than that? What gorgeous colors! Silver and gold is there more plentiful than in any bank. What lady ever dressed finer? And there are millions of just such beautiful things in nature. Take anything that you come across, the first pebble that you can lay your hands on, and it's a marvel. It's infinite in its loveliness."

"How I envy you! What a glory it is to be a poet! Everything thrills you. The swaying of a branch is music. I wonder if you see the reality, or are you cheated by your imagination?"

"I think that poetry and truth are one, and that poetry dwells in truth and can dwell nowhere else. Yet what is truth? We don't know. For us, then, the beautiful only is the true. Yet again, when anything ceases to be true to us, it ceases to be beautiful. What is false is hideous. How happy the

world would have been, if it had had only the poets to interpret the universe! The curse came, when theologians undertook to explain things. It's all nonsense to try to explain things. All we want are pictures. Damn theories."

"Don't you theorize about the butterfly or the stone or the flower?"

"No, I don't. They are, and that's sufficient."

"Science, then, is folly?"

"It is, unless it stops with observation. It can arrange things and improve things, but it can't explain 'em. Science and poetry are one. Both depend on observation of what actually is. Science makes the cup, poetry furnishes the wine. Both enable us to drink deep draughts of life."

"I see no speculation in your eyes."

"I don't want speculation. I want insight, vision. I don't speculate about the butterfly. I simply see it. What more can any one do? The trouble is that the vast majority of people don't see the butterfly; in fact, they see hardly anything. They are blinded by speculation."

"Well, one must be born a poet in order to see; and, if not born a poet, then he must speculate."

"We are all born poets, I think. It is education that robs us of our birthright."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Charlie.

A singular sort of an individual entered. He was not prepossessing by any means. He had a hang-dog look. His hair was combed straight back from his forehead. His eyes had hardly any color, but you might call them watery blue. They did not look at you steadily. They were restless, serpent eyes. His nose was crooked. His lips were thin, and behind them were a few small and gleaming teeth. A thin gray beard was scattered over his face. His gait was somewhat shambling, and he bent his head with an air of humility. There was no assertion of manhood about him. He looked like a walking apology.

This was Gooch. "The deacon" was the name he went by. He was deacon, and a very good one he made when at home. He had some faculty for praying. He could talk glibly of the total depravity of man. He seemed to believe in it with his whole heart. He could discourse also of regeneration, but his faith in that was not so strong as his faith in depravity. Above all, he was eminently fitted for his office, from the fact that no one could look at him without a most solemn and awful feeling. You couldn't laugh while in his presence. He made you feel the utter worthlessness of human life.

Like all deacons, he wanted money. There was never a deacon yet who didn't hunger for