

## GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

We are only parts of a stupendous whole, and it is impossible for us to know the origin or the end of that whole. We can have nothing to do with the final causes; that's nonsense. We are in the midst of nature, with her infinite law and her infinite life, to take care of ourselves; and from our stand-point, and in our experience, there are many things that are wrong, and we can't trust to nature to remove them. We must trust to our humanity."

"I don't feel much like trusting our humanity. I think humanity is a humbug too, as well as God."

"There, I say, you are mistaken. God is a humbug, because he's a mere creature of the imagination; but humanity is a fact. Don't you believe that a fact is of some value?"

"I don't know. I sometimes think with a certain Frenchman that I'm a phantasy floating on the bosom of an infinite phantasy. Really, I sometimes hardly believe that I exist, but am only a nightmare."

"Your orthodoxy has indeed been a curse to you, and I don't wonder. It tries to make things right, but at what a violation of justice! It is not strange that it drives men to intellectual despair, and destroys all confidence and makes existence like a troubled dream. Infidelity simply accepts nature, good and bad; it doesn't try to explain away the bad and in so doing explain away the good also. It takes nature as a reality, and takes evil as a reality; and so it finds good a reality. I accept the evil of things, and I don't propose to explain it away into an airy nothing, but to fight it as a stubborn opponent. I am an optimist only in the sense that we can get the better of evil things, provided we work hard enough and have plenty of patience and pluck; but I'm not an optimist in the sense that there's no such thing as evil. Such an optimist is, I think, a fool, who avoids the real universe and dwells in a world of fine phrases. A pessimist who believes the world is the worst possible, and fights the devil with his heart full of despair, is preferable to one who airs his selfishness in such a slush of words."

"And isn't it the worst possible universe where there is such a thing as death? What can be more horrible than that. If we did not love then we might die without pain; but, loving, what a curse, what a curse it is to die!"

"Yet the loving is good at any rate. For that I am thankful; and loving may be more sweet, because we love in the midst of danger and separation."

"Is it not your power of loving that gives you the most awful pain?"

"It is, and such seems inevitable. The greatest joy is mingled with greatest suffering."

"But need it be so?"

"Why ask that? We cannot judge of necessity. We can only know what is. We must say this universe might have been better, any more than we can say it might have been worse; for it was not born of will, it was not made. It simply is. It can't change itself, nor can we change it. It's useless to discuss possibilities."

"But isn't human perfection a mere possibility?"

"It is, as some people dream of it; and so it's a waste of time to consider it. But progress is not a mere possibility, but a probability, and a matter of fact. All the perfection that I think of is progress. Where there's no progress there's no perfection, and where there's no evil there's no progress, and so perfection and evil are inextricably intertwined. They must go together. Don't you see?"

"It's pretty well mixed up, that's a fact. We must be sick in order to get well, and getting well is perhaps the happiest phase of human existence. What a confounded puzzle life is!"

"When the puzzle ceases, life ceases. If we could unravel the universe, what a sorry affair it would be! But it is everlastingly woven with a million colors, with a million patterns, now bright, now dark; and this is the food of thought."

"Don't you try to solve the mystery of death by thinking that it may be a new form of life, and that you and your sister will meet again?"

"No, I do not, because I cannot. My mind cannot accept the conclusion, though my heart perhaps yearns for it. I have not the slightest evidence that such is the case, and therefore I have no ground for hope, and do not hope. It is not the future that becomes sweet to me through death, but the past. I think now of what she has been more deeply than ever before, but not of what she will be."

"You endure it bravely."

"Because I cannot help it. If prayers and tears could bring her back, I would shake these mountains with my petitions. I am not ashamed to weep, if weeping would do any good. I did weep, when the blow first came. I let the hot tears flow. They did me good. I was like a child. But why should I continue to lament? Life is ever new, and I must meet it with new hope and desire."

"I never saw your sister. She was retiring and was not fond of company, and I could not think of intruding upon your privacy. You know how we are in this wild life. Why, we scarcely know each other's names yet. I call you Bill, and

I'm Charlie. That's enough. What are names, where we have so much reality and so little ceremony. In civilized life, I suppose they must have long names, for names is about all that people have to get acquainted with, and so they need handles and title; but anything will do here, since we deal heart with heart, and put on no style.

Can I see your sister now? Our friendship is so dear that I would have her image in my memory."

"You shall see Madeline, and remember her with me. I am glad you have such a wish."

"Madeline!" said Charlie, with a little start. "I once knew a Madeline. She was dear to me, but now forgotten, because unworthy."

"Then this Madeline shall take her place, for she is worthy."

"The two men walked into the cabin. Jennie met them, having completed her sacred task to the dead."

"Thank you, Jennie," said Will as he took her hand. "What should I do without you in this sad hour? Is she ready for burial?"

"Yes, sweet as an angel," said Jennie. "She seems almost living, she looks so beautiful."

They passed to the room where she lay, clothed in white and crowned with flowers.

As they approached the bedside, a strange wild look came into the eyes of Charlie. He stared steadfastly at the face of the dead girl. He trembled like a leaf.

"My God!" he cried, "this is Madeline Burnham. Is your name Burnham?" he said, turning to Will.

"Yes, Will Burnham; and what is your name?"

"Morton."

"Alas! you made her what she is."

"She was my betrothed. Oh, how I loved her, and then how I hated her! O my love, my love, this is agony indeed! Have I been false, or you?" And he flung himself passionately at her bedside, and wailed and sobbed like a child.

## CHAPTER VI.

The grief of a man, how strong it is, when for a moment he is overcome by the uttermost anguish of life! Mighty indeed must that suffering be, which can so break up the bulwarks of the will, and the world's rough experience. When men weep, it is because they have been struck by a blow that is like the fierce throb of an earthquake. Burnham was amazed and silent, the revelation was so sudden and terrible. It tore through him like the breath of a whirlwind. The infinite sorrow of his sister's life rushed upon his mind with bitter recollections. The tragedy was wrought again that darkened and disorder'd her once sunny and

beautiful life, that so racked her heart and brain that disease worked its subtle course until it bloomed in the white lily of death.

She was free now from the feverish torture. The waves of suffering broke upon, but did not disturb her marble quiet, while her false lover was writhing at her feet.

"I do not understand it," said Morton, as he at length slowly arose, and fixed his eyes upon his dead love. "Was she true and was I a fool? Oh, how heavenly true she looks in the unveiled majesty of death! How could I have been deceived? And yet I was hasty, I distrusted her because I distrusted the world. Oh, what a curse it is to lose one's faith! Paradise flashed before me, and I called it a desert and turned away. O Madeline, forgive me!"

"It is too late now. No prayers nor tears can recall the light to her eyes or the blessing to her lips. O man, she loved you as you were not worthy to be loved."

"And I loved her too.—oh, how fondly, how deeply! All the fountains of my heart flowed to her. She was the ideal of my young life."

"Yet you gave her up, you deserted her."

"I did because I thought I had proof that she was false."

"Why did you accept that so-called proof so readily?"

"Alas! because I distrusted all. That was the disease that lurked in my blood and brain. I thought it wise to be sceptical, to laugh at human goodness, to say that every man had his price. This seemed to be born in me, or rather it was the result of my training; for I was taught, as the soul of orthodox religion, that everyone was totally depraved. And when, by force of of reasoning, I rejected the theology of my parents, that saddest, deepest lesson of all I retained. I could not get rid of it, I looked upon men as almost brutes. I believed Madeline an exception; but, when I heard the cunningly devised tale against her truth, then my distrust of all destroyed my trust in her, and she seemed no better than the rest; and in my wild anger I left her, never to return."

"I was but young then, and knew you not, for you met and became acquainted with each other at the Academy, and, when you visited home, I was away. This is the first time I have seen you. Oh, how I hated you! She loved you, she waited for you, and when you came not the hope of her life was quenched. The light of her soul seemed to fade out, and a gradual and gentle insanity came over her; while the brightness of her intellect was undiminished. She brooded over you. Her life was fixed to you. Your desertion left her like a wreck, to slowly waste