

GLODEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

Close by Golden Throne is a vast canon of a wild, peculiar formation. It is about ten miles in length and through it flows a limpid stream. At the very mouth of the canon is what is called the Buried Castle. It seems like an immense and time-worn building, almost submerged in dust and accumulated rubbish. The towers, battlements, and roofs, rising one above another, have a strangely real appearance. As the canon narrows, on the left is a dome, a mass of rocks, oval as the summit, which rises hundreds of feet into the air. Half a mile further on is "Who Knows," a huge stone having the outlines of a human face, with a very prominent and well-shapen nose. It stands close to the ancient trail. Near by are Indian hieroglyphics on the side of a perpendicular wall, seventy-five feet from the ground. These symbols have been here for so long a time that the Indians inhabiting the country can give no explanation of them, save that they had "always been there." The rock seems to have been chiselled into, and the cavities filled with indelible paint. A mile further is Throne Room. This magnificent indentation is about two hundred feet from the ground in the side of a basaltic wall five hundred feet high. What a grand reception hall, of which no king can boast. Its beauties and grandeurs are indescribable. In nearly the centre of the canon is Conscience Pass. Here, walls of rock tower six hundred feet high, and approach so closely together that there is barely room for the brook and the narrow path beside it. From hence toward the west, the canon widens and abounds with noble scenery. In the summer, its declivities are clothed with verdure and flowers, and its pines are in their utmost vigor.

Morton wandered to this savage and magnificent spot. He desired solitude and the most awful and terrible forms of nature. His soul was tossing like an ocean. His grief, his remorse, were tremendous. He flung himself upon the ground. He groaned aloud, and in the depths of the dark canon he uttered a cry like that of a wild beast in agony. He sank exhausted upon a hard couch of rocks, and seemed for a time insensible. It was the fearful struggle of a pierced and quivering human spirit, trying to regain its hold on life and purpose. He felt at times as if he were growing insane, so horrible were the feelings that crept over him. Only by sheer effort of the will did he at last arouse himself, saying, "I must conquer." He climbed to the Throne Room, and sat amid its weird and fascinating wonders, like a dis-crowned and lonely king. The setting sun was flooding the canon with delicious

and sparkling gold; mists rolled over the resplendent tops of the mountains; clouds tossed and revelled like rich-laden ships in the immeasurable blue beyond. The long stretch of canon seemed filled with a thousand hues. The forests were refulgent, as if with the jewelled garments of a monarch. The stones all about him, the flowers and the verdure, strange and ancient forms almost human in their aspect, seemed like sparkling presences in the lustrous fire that bathed them. It was a glittering, inspiring, powerful scene, filling the soul as if with the nectar of the gods.

Morton walked to and fro with swift strides, gathering together the tumultuous and mighty energies of his being, seeking out of the beauty and majesty of nature the secret of regeneration; for there is such a thing as "being born again" in a high and noble sense,—not by the machinations of men, but by the splendid influx of nature herself. There are times when a new purpose arises in the soul, when old habits of thought are flung off like an old skin, and the soul stands naked to the universe, either to be crushed or clothed upon with new and vaster possibilities, and a fresh growth begins. Morton was in one of these transcendent moments. The fierce blow had flung him into chaos. The old world could not be rebuilt. There must be something new, or only a wreck. He must be more high, more noble, more strong than before, or sink.

"O Madeline," he cried, "how my life heaves and tosses before me like a bewildering sea,—infancy, childhood, manhood mingling as if driven by a storm! What glories, what joys I have had! What bitterness, what pain! Could I have helped this? Was I forced to it? Could I not have chosen better, and plucked the flower of a beautiful joy? Too late, now! Alas, too late! The flower is gone, withered, dead. The past is unchangeable in its eternal misery and ruin. We may knock, but we can never open the doors to life there. They are barred and bolted, and so will ever be. Oh, how hard it is that we cannot go back, and, through the winding path of youth, remedy our mistakes. Alas that they must ever be! Once done, never to be undone, while the fearful retribution rolls on. Why are we made living, conscious beings to suffer so immeasurably? Why do we not forget? Perhaps we shall, some time. Ah, I do not wish to; for, if we forget the evil, we must also forget the good, and the good is to sweet ever to be forgotten. Let me keep the evil, if, with the evil, I can also keep the good. I cannot forget thy smiles. I cannot forget thy sweetness. I cannot forget the thrilling joy that I once had. I cannot forget the woundrous, passionate clasp of hand and touch of

lip. Oh, the joys of the past, how immeasurably greater than its sorrow! And from their bosom hope springs flaming forth. My heart is not dead. It leaps to action. It would try the future. It feels the creative force. I will not be crushed. I will accomplish."

He drank in, as if from a goblet, of the jubilant and sparkling scene about him. Slowly, he descended, and walked along the now darkling valley with buoyant steps. He neared the camp, and saw some of its whitewashed shanties gleaming faintly among the trees. The noise of a tumult greeted his ears, and then a strange, wild, despairing, heart-rendering cry for "Help! help! help!" With the swiftness of a tiger, he leaped into the camp.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a not unusual and yet a terrific scene that met his view. They were on the point of lynching little Pete. The noose was already about his neck, and the rope, thrown over a limb. The faces of the men were full of grim determination. There did not seem a particle of sympathy for the struggling culprit. Those who were not actively engaged in the affair looked carelessly on, as if it were all right; for lynching in that wild country was regarded as the only form of justice, and people accepted it as in more civilized communities they accept the mandate of a court. Generally, lynching is resorted to only when the crime is beyond doubt; and in this case it was well understood that Pete was guilty, and richly deserved his fate.

In ordinary circumstances, Morton might have done nothing, accustomed as he was to these exhibitions of a rude justice, and believing that they were the only means by which any kind of order could be preserved. Pete was such a strange sort of a waif, so unsociable and shy and secret in his ways, that one might assume almost any wickedness concerning him. He did not beget confidence by his ways of living.

This time, however, Morton dashed in, and seized the little fellow and cut the rope.

"What's this for?" he cried.

"It's all right, pard" said Big Dick. "He's a horse-thief and a murderer, so just hand me the rope, and I'll fix it again. I am sorry you interfered. It's a waste of time."

"How do you know that he is a horse-thief and a murderer?"

"We caught him on the horse; and the old man Maddox is dead as a smelt.—his throat cut, and all his money gone. Poor devil! he expected to start for the States next week. He had a nice little pile of savings."

"Hang him! hang him!" shouted a dozen or so strong voices.

Little Pete was trembling in the arms of Morton. He was speechless with terror.

"Is this so?" said Morton to him, kindly. All that the poor child could do was to sob and shake his head.

"Hurry up, Morton. We can't delay. It's right."

"But I must know more of this. I am not satisfied."

"Satisfied! Look in Maddox's cabin, you'll see him dead; and we found this boy fleeing away on his horse."

"I didn't do it," broke forth Pete at length, with shrieking voice. "Oh, save me, save me! I am innocent!"

"The boy says he is innocent. I will not have him hung without a trial. There's a chance he didn't do it."

"That's all bo-h," said Big Dick. He did it. Nobody doubts it, and by God we'll hang him here and now."

"Not with my consent," said Morton. "I protest. Is there no one to side with me?"

No answer was made. The popular opinion was against little Pete, and no one cared to brave it. The proof against him was so overwhelming that it seemed useless.

"We'd better hang him," said Deacon Gooch, as solemnly as if he were in prayer-meeting. "It will save all further trouble. I believe he's an imp, and there's no chance of converting him. If there were, I'd relieve him a day or two, in order that he might go to glory. But he's a child of the devil, and so I say, pull the rope. I never could get him to read the bible. He's a bad one, I know."

"Oh, yes. I suppose you'd like to hang everybody that didn't believe your bible," said Morton. "That's worse than murder in your eyes. I begin to have some faith in the boy, seeing that he wouldn't read your rapine and murder."

"Oh, damn the bible!" said Big Dick. "I wouldn't read it myself. But to business. This boy must be hung; and I propose to see it done at once. Hand me the rope there."

A dozen hands flung him the rope, and he began to make a noose. Morton looked at this crowd of excited men. They were bent upon their purpose. There was apparently no chance to save the boy; and in his heart Morton acknowledged that the proof was almost positive enough to justify lynching. Even if the boy had a trial, he would probably be convicted, and then there would be no escape. Little Pete clung to him, wound his arms about his leg, crouched like a dog and cried:—

"Oh, save me! I am not guilty. Do not let them hang me. Oh, shoot me first! It is so horrible! Oh! oh! oh!"

"I will defend you," said Morton, "even with my life. You shall have a fair trial."

The child sank at his feet, and lay almost motionless. Big Dick