

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

After that there was comparatively little danger, for the road had only few turns; and although the horses went at full speed, Frank's firm grip held them in the right track.

"That is splendid!" said Paddie. "I never went so fast in my life behind a horse. We are saved and what will the saints say? And such a good time as we have had of it! To tumble right by the jaws of death like that, and euchre him at last! I wouldn't like to try it again, though. I'm afraid you wouldn't hold so good a hand again, Frank."

"We won't try it over," said Frank. "Once in a lifetime is enough. But, as you say, it's fun; and I'm glad we did have a chance to see how fast we could go around the point. Only a little more, and we'd a gone."

The horses dashed two hundred feet by the station before they could be stopped, they were going at such wild speed.

"Here's my hand," said Moccasin Bill to Frank. "You did a good turn there."

"That's when I depended upon luck," said Frank.

"Luck of course," said Morton; "but there was skill also. We can't pay for luck, that belongs to all of us; but I chip in this bag of gold for your skill."

"And I too," said the rest; and in the twinkling of an eye two or three hundred dollars was shoved into Frank's hand. He didn't want to take it; but in the end he had to, and then there was a treat all around.

The scream of the iron horse was heard, and the thunder of the clattering train; and, as if by magic, they were soon sweeping to the Golden Gates.

It was evening when they entered the vast and splendid city. For miles, the lights were glittering; and, as they traversed the brilliant streets on every side, they could see colossal palaces. Like all miners, they put up at the most expensive hotel in the city; and soon a supper fit for a king was placed before them.

"That strange ride gives me a good appetite," said Paddie, "so I guess I'll pitch in."

"That's enough to cure any man of dyspepsia," said Morton.

"We escaped by a miracle, because we were coming to hear Ingersoll," said Paddie.

"Escaped by good luck, I should say," said Moccasin Bill.

"Now, what do you call good luck," said Paddie.

"It's coming out all right when you can't help it," said Moccasin. "At the same time, if Frank hadn't held those reins pretty tight, we'd a gone to the devil, sure."

"Then, I guess there wasn't much luck about it," said Morton.

"Except in turning the corner," replied Moccasin. "I think Frank himself might admit that a puff of wind would have sent us flying over."

"It's all right, and would have been all right, if we'd gone to smash," said Jennie. "Let us eat our supper."

"That's philosophy," said Paddie. "We didn't go to smash, and now the best thing we can do is to eat. That's what we were saved for. That's the final cause, as theologians say."

After supper, the party broke up and drifted here and there over the gorgeous and wonderful city.

Paddie and Morton and Burnham stood at the sea, and watched its radiant tides, over which the ships floated and flashed, and listened to the deep, far music of the billows as they broke along the winding shore.

"What a magician civilization is!" said Morton. "How it has transformed these shores, decked them with a million jewels! What a power we ourselves have in and through this magical touch! We seem to have a hundred arms."

"We do have the advantage of the savages, though we sacrifice our liberty," said Paddie. "But liberty is so sweet that I hardly know which to choose, the palace-car or the canoe."

"I think I'll take the palace-car," said Will. "I go for comfort. Liberty is sweet, but I don't care to lug a canoe for the sake of having my own way."

"But civilization enlarges, even while it cramps," said Morton. "It carries us over land and sea, swift as a bird. It breaks a thousand chains, where it rivets one."

"I don't know," said Paddie.

"We are so used to our chains that we don't feel them. But it is a luxury to leave society, and traverse the universe afoot and alone, and follow our own sweet will, up and down, over hill and dale, and pluck the roses and the thorns, and rest at night with the boundless sky above. I'm not willing to yield my liberty. I only keep trace with civilization. I don't make peace with it. I'm ready to break at any time."

"I," said Morton, "make a defensive alliance, but not offensive. Civilization is my fort, but not my base of supplies."

"It is our master and our slave," said Burnham. "As a master I abhor it, as a slave I admire it. It is as strong as Jove. I will use it, and I will defy it."

"Good for you, Will!" said Paddie. "Let us have a little revolt all to ourselves. It's so nice to pitch into things on the sly and get the better of 'em, while we seem to be their most obedient servant."

"Life is full of compromises and masks," said Morton. "The inward and the outward never have anything more than a speaking acquaintance. We can have only one confident, ourself; and then we have, occasionally, to pull the wool over our own eyes."

"Honesty is the best policy," said Paddie, "when your honesty is like that of the world; but, when it's a different thing, then to be honest don't pay."

"Then comes the question how much we can stand," said Morton. "I must confess that I'm willing to compromise for my food and clothes. I don't care for the brown-stone front or the coach and six. But, when it's utter honesty and utter starvation, then I think my tongue ought to do a little lying, for the sake of my stomach."

"Be true, though the heavens fall," said Paddie.

"That's easy enough," said Morton, "but it isn't easy enough to be hungry and naked, when all the world about you is happy; and, if you die, you are forgotten the next minute, and people wonder what you were such a fool for. It's easy enough to be a martyr at the stake, but it's mighty hard to be a martyr in a garret and live on sixpence a day. When it comes to that I cave in. I shut my mouth in preference to being snuffed out. Society has got the drop on me; and, generally, I must just back down."

"Sometimes, I suppose you'll stick," said Paddie.

"Absolute submission is worse than death," said Morton. "I'd rather die than live as the majority of people live, like so many machines. I must kick some, I must have a little fresh air."

"That's the way with all poor martyrs. They kicked in the wrong place. They took just one whiff too much of fresh air."

"Sometimes our manhood drives us to an out-and-out fight, and then we can't help it; and we must go to the wall, it may be, but with your own colors flying."

"We won't go to the wall here," said Paddie. "Money in our pockets, a city, one of the wonders of the world, at our feet, and Ingersoll to give us a breath of fresh air. I'm satisfied with what I have for the present."

Slowly, the great hall filled. The wealth and fashion of the city were gathering to hear the mighty oration. The faces of most of them were beaming with intelligence and keen interest. Here and there was a sombre countenance, as if some spies from the christian camp were in attendance, to find out what was really going on and report proceedings. It was a daring undertaking, however, to run the risk of having the reason aroused; for if one should, under the magical influence of the charm-

ing oration, begin to think, how terrible the consequences might be!

Our brave little company was on hand, securing the best seats in the house, and determined to have their fill of all the good things said.

"I wouldn't have believed this possible, ten years ago," said Morton, as he glanced over the magnificent audience—"that an infidel could be as popular as the theatre, and draw a larger assembly than most gifted preachers. I am simply astonished at the progress the world is making."

"It has taken a long time to get a start, but we are going with geometric ratio now," said Paddie. "Infidelity is in the very air we breathe. Everybody is catching it, though they may not break out. I presume half this audience are church members. They pay a dollar to hear Ingersoll, not from mere curiosity, but because they are really hungry for what he says. They want something new."

"The whole church will finally succumb to this deep want for something new," said Morton. "For human nature is the same everywhere, and it won't always be satisfied with the old, unless it can prove itself the best; and what is best the spirit of the age will no longer permit tradition alone to decide. Orthodoxy is fast losing its rigors, even to the most elect. Hell fire ceases to bring a shudder. The devil is no longer an object of interest. It's all come to be as disagreeable and commonplace as the tax bill."

"Christianity has been a fairy land," said Burnham. "But the soul has gone out of it, and it's as dry as summer's dust. Infidelity is the only thing that gives the imagination a chance to play. When voiced by genius, the world becomes enchanted."

Unannounced, the speaker stood before the vast audience, and was greeted with a storm of applause. He was of commanding presence.

"He reminds me of the hills and big plains," said Moccasin Bill, who arose and waved his hat in the excitement of the moment. "I feel the breath of my home about me as I look upon his face."

How calmly the orator began, with the gracefulness and ease of a drawing-room conversationalist! He seemed to speak without effort, and to talk as if he had but a single listener. There was an indiscribable melody in his voice, so strong, so clear, so full of the abounding freshness of prairie lands. Like the notes of a bird it opened the great, wide horizon of the world's advance. How easily his myriad listeners were caught up and borne along the current of his talk that swept so broad and deep, and yet with such fine equipoise! There was no jar: the humor burst forth spontaneously,