

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

Knowledge, you know, is so unaccommodating. You can't change it to suit your convenience. It's right there, and everlasting, immutable thing. It won't budge an inch for you or me, and you can't get around it either. But a fancy—how accommodating a fancy is! You can make it anything at will, like Hamlet's cloud, a whale or a weasel, or a barn or a palace. No wonder people like fancies, and crucify the man who would put a few facts in their place."

"Ingersoll has done me good," said Jennie. "I never want to hear a preacher again. I've tried to get some comfort out of them, but it's no go. They are a poor set, fit only to eat your best chicken. I'm glad to hear somebody that believes in this world and makes things around about us beautiful."

"That's just my fix," said Tim. "Long time ago, I tried to be converted. I was never so bothered in my life. I tried to feel bad and couldn't. I gave up hunting and fishing, and went to meditating on death and hell. I even let them baptize me, and caught cold, and then I thought sure I'd have conviction; and one day I got so mad a-thinking it over that I swore like a pirate. After that, I felt better, and never sought religion since. Now, I ain't much anyway; but what I am Ingersoll has got hold of, sure as you live. If ever I see anybody in want, I'll help 'em. I won't stand one side, with my hands in my pocket."

"It does make me feel kind of good to hear that fellow," said Sol. "I expect to go to the to the devil, if there is one. I'm sort of demoralized, I've been in politics so long. I don't feel as if there's any use in trying to be good. If I should join the church, I would only be a hypocrite, as half the politicians are. However, I ain't all bad, and no man is. He has streaks of good, and Ingersoll brings out those streaks better'n any man I know. Really, if I was to vote now, I'd vote honest. I wouldn't sell myself, not even to a railroad. I don't believe I'd accept a pass, even. I would like to begin life over again, and work for a living."

Slowly the vast audience dispersed. Charlie, with his usual Yankee curiosity, watched the many elegant and noble figures and faces of men and women that passed, when he was startled by a vision of rare beauty. It was that kind of beauty, indescribable and marvellous, that thrilled him from head to foot with the sweet, fierce sensations of love.

She was young, apparently not more than twenty years of age, of about medium height, with gracious and majestic presence. She had that queenly style whose move-

ment in every circumstance is one of perfect ease. Her features were mobile and most expressive. Her dark eyes were large and brilliant, of mingled dark and green, ever changing in their splendid lusture, and looking at one with the frank tenderness. Her hair was abundant and flowing, and dashed about her forehead in graceful ringlets, according to the latest fashion. She had on a "love bonnet," that just fitted her well-shapen head, and over it flashed the wing of some many-colored bird. She was richly attired. Rare jewels flamed about her delicate white throat and hands. As she passed Charlie, she looked at him with a sort of strange and wondering recognition. A faint flush touched her cheek. Then she was lost in the crowd.

Who can tell whence came the mystic arrows of love, why this or that attracts and enchants and and subdues and thrills? Others might not have noticed this beautiful woman: they would be seeking and caring for something different; but she came upon Charlie with bewildering power. He could have flung himself at her feet and worshiped. In the midst of her loveliness, there was something that seemed most strangely familiar. I suppose it is always so with lovers. They imagine they have met in the long ago. Where had Charlie met this beautiful princess? He asked himself the question in vain, and while asking she disappeared. He tried to find her again in the crowd, but could not.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Did you see that woman," said Charlie.

"What woman?" said Will. "I've seen a good many women."

"That one that was so handsome," said Charlie.

"But they are all handsome," said Will. "I can't see any difference."

"You are as blind as a bat. I mean the handsomest one of all."

"I couldn't pick her out," said Will. "They are all one to me, like the stars."

"How stupid!" said Charlie. "She was perfectly divine, and you didn't see her?"

"I might have seen her," said Will; "but among so many she didn't strike me particularly."

"You didn't see her," said Charlie. "If you had you wouldn't be so cool. You wouldn't have had eyes for any one else. I tell you she's the handsomest I ever set eyes on. She's perfection."

"Oh, you have a lover's phantasy, I see," said Will. "I envy you but it'll pass off, and tomorrow evening you'll see others just as handsome."

"I don't believe it," said Charlie. "I'm sure I've seen her somewhere. She almost bowed at me."

"Another freak of imagination,"

said Will. You are far gone. You look dazed and wondering."

"I wish I knew where she went to," said Charlie. "I'm afraid I shall never see her again."

"Yes, you will, if you really love her. Love, you know, is fate."

"I hope so, but I hate to trust to chance, I might as well forget."

"Yes, you might; for, unless you are richer than you are now, what are you going to do with a wife? She wouldn't look well in a hovel."

"By Jove! she'd be a goddess anywhere; but what's the use of vexing myself? I'll call it an apparition, and dream about it. Let's go to the hotel."

As they came to the hotel, Sol Jones met them.

"Come up and see Ingersoll," he said. "We'll have a talk with him before we go to bed. He's a room full now, and a gay time they are having. I used to know Bob a bit, down in Southern Indiana. I guess he'll give us a grip."

And he did, sure enough. He remembered Sol, and he gave a cordial greeting to the rest of the company.

"What a shake that was," said Moccasin Bill. "It warms me all over. I feel at home, as if I'd known him all my life. He doesn't put on a bit of style does he? You don't have to be introduced to him at the end of a ten-foot pole."

The room was full. All sorts were there, friends and acquaintances whom he had met in many a varied circumstance, in his brilliant career on the forum and stump. He was even more remarkable amid a set of genial companions than on the platform. His vigorous mind was surcharged with thoughts which electrified as they constantly and joyously overflowed. Yet, with all this ease and spontaneity, he was a profound thinker and a thorough student. He was ready to meet any question, and grapple with the deepest philosophic problems of the day, often throwing a flood of light upon them by a single illustration; while, about the intricate and puzzling pathways of human endeavor, his wit flew and coruscated like some lively Ariel. There was no such thing as being exhausted, for the dryest details were glorified by the spell of his genius.

"By the way, Sol," said he, "I believe Aunt Betty is out here somewhere. I used to meet her at Shawneetown years ago. She did my washing, and did it well."

"She's at Devil's Gulch," said Sol. "Eighty years old, and lively as a cricket still. She belongs to the Methodist church, and sings as loud as any of 'em. She can't give up her religion."

"I don't ask her to," said Bob. "She enjoys it. I don't think, however, she has much faith in hell."

"That she hasn't," said Sol.

"I've heard her say that, when she got to heaven, she'd ask the Lord to let her go down to hell and save sinners. She'd do it, I know. She don't believe in letting anybody go to the bad."

"There's where she and I agree," said Bob. "Here, Sol, give this to her with my best regards," handing a fifty-dollar greenback.

"That'll do her old heart good," said Sol, "a deal more than an illuminatd Bible. She always said that Bob was one of the best christians she ever knew, though his doctrine wasn't exactly scriptural. She thought, however, you were about as near right as Calvin."

"She never could go Calvin," said Bob. "I think, on the whole, she'd prefer me. Infant damnation was too much for her."

At this juncture, a note was brought the Colonel. He opened and read aloud as follows:—

Robert G. Ingersoll:

Dear Sir—I have a sincere interest in the welfare of your soul. I desire to convert you. All that is necessary is that I should talk to you for a few minutes; for the word of the Lord is sharper than a two-edged sword, and pierceth to the dividing asunder of the soul and body. I have unanswerable arguments. I have studied the scripture for years, and know it by heart; and I can remove all objections to a faith in its divine teaching. Will you give me permission to lead you to the green pastures and beside the still waters?

Truly yours,
Rev. Tomothy Dwight Bobbins.

The Colonel immediately penned the following answer:—

Rev. Timothy Dwight Bobbins:

Dear Sir—I have no objection to meet your unanswerable arguments. I am perfectly willing to be converted. I want the truth. If you have it, I shall be pleased to welcome it. I will give you full opportunity to show what you can do with the sword of the Lord. Yours for the green pastures and still waters. R. G. Ingersoll.

In a minute or two, the Rev. Timothy Dwight Bobbins entered. He looked as thin as if he had prayed and fasted forty days and nights. His coat and hat were as antique as Noah's ark. His boots looked as though they had travelled Jordan and found it indeed a hard road. He had on a dirty white cravat, and his hair hung loosely about his head, only about half-combed. He walked with an uncertain gait, and leaned over almost double. He occasionally rolled his eyes to the ceiling, and rubbed his hands with a devout motion. He carried under his arms what seemed to be a set of dilapidated sermons. No doubt, they had endured severe service and been used over and over again. Perhaps these were the "Sword of the Lord."