

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

She was, indeed, a noble woman, full of the vitality of health and nature, blooming in the midst of Orthodoxy like a sweet flower amid Alpine snows, but no more the result of Orthodoxy than the flowers are the result of their icy surroundings. Orthodoxy, harsh and rugged as it is, cannot altogether crush nature, which will force itself through the most unfavorable environments; and thus many a beautiful character flourishes in the midst of its desolate creeds, but because underneath them is the ever-flowing life of the universe, which will manifest itself in all times and places.

Demorest could not have found a woman more adapted to his passionate and somewhat weak nature than Milly. She was a perpetual rest and stimulant to him. I do not think he could have endured the painful restraint of his position but for her genial spirit. She completely satisfied his poetic being, and without exciting thought stirred and exalted his emotions.

"You have a gem of a wife, indeed," said Paddie, after they had spent an hour or two in her delightful company. "You are safe as long as you are with her. She will keep you fresh and natural and sincere in spite of your restraints. You take your text from the bible, but I'll bet that every time you preach from her lips and eyes."

"I do that," said Demorest. "The text is only a tumble-down gate that I pass through, and then I roam through the green pastures of my own imagination, and Milly is with me; and that is the way I preach my sermons."

"That is why people like them so well."

"Yes I can't tell them the secret. I must make them believe that I get my material out of the Scriptures, when I get it out of my own home and the joys of my own heart. They think I study and brood over Adam and Eve, and Abraham and Moses, and Jesus and Paul, when I do no such thing, but look at my flowers and the eyes of Milly, and listen to her songs. I suppose it is necessary for some to have this sort of traditional perspective, but it is a roundabout way of getting the gospel that is at our very feet."

"I should think you'd sometimes feel like breaking out and smashing things."

"I do. I am terribly iconoclastic at times. I fret and fume. Then, I take a smoke, read Bob Ingersoll, and that satisfies me, and I wear the yoke. Ingersoll, you see, is vicariously my infidelity. He expresses what I want expressed in my supreme moments. Then, come back to commonplace, and do the work that fate seems to compel me to do. I really couldn't stand it, if I didn't get a breath of heaven

and witness the glory from the mountain-top by reading this arch enemy once in a while."

"What a puzzle the whole thing is!" said Charlie. "Of course if it was a mere matter of mathematics, we could straighten things out at once; but I realize what an unfathomable force the human heart is, and, having wound itself about these old doctrines, it is difficult to break way. But it must be like living in prison."

"It is," said Demorest; "and wildly and rebelliously I break against these bars, and swear I won't stand it any longer. Then, I feel weak as a child; for what can I do against this enormous power of custom? Why, I don't even dare to change my hat or trousers, much less can I change my creed."

"We must hear you speak some Sunday," said Charlie.

"I don't care about that. It would disturb me to know that there were men of thought in my congregation, for I don't preach to men of thought. I preach simply to the sentiment. I have no thinkers in my pews, though I have judges and lawyers and merchants and a few doctors, and shoals of fashionable women; but they don't think, and they don't want to think while in the church, and I don't try to make them think. If I did, I should cease to be eloquent."

"But, depending so much on pure feelings, I should think sometimes you'd exhaust the fountain; for, unless feeling can be fed by thought, it runs dry."

"I do feel like a vacuum sometimes, utterly empty, a very shadow. I can't describe the horrible sensation. Everything becomes an unreality. I flee from my congregation, and I would fain bury myself in the sea. My only resource is Milly. I have her play the piano or talk to me, or show me some of her pretty work. Fortunately, she does not think. If she did, she would drive me crazy. She never troubles me with any theological puzzles, nor seems conscious of my dogmas. She simply pictures. Her world is the world of beauty. Through beauty only does she express truth. I drink, and forget the strong demands of the intellect. What more can I do?"

"We must judge for ourselves," said Will. "I couldn't act as you do, but I admit that my nature is different. I suppose with many there must be some sort of compromise; and yet, when you compromise, where are you to draw the line? I prefer to draw the line at where I see the absolute truth, and go no further. Possibly, you and the thousands of ministers that are thinking and acting like you are doing some good in a certain way, making people happy; and yet we know not what subtle corruption is going on as the result of this de-

ception, how all the fibres of manhood are being weakened. Beauty is indeed of supreme importance, and yet is not truth the first step to beauty? However, I won't preach; for I know that one's destiny is woven out of his temperaments. He must work through what he is, and not simply through what he sees."

"I can't solve it," said Demorest. "The more I think the less I seem to know. It is impossible in any circumstances to carry out our ideal. We cannot be absolutely sincere, and who can tell what truth is? Where shall we begin inside or outside? Why waste time in endless thought? I want to do something; and, in order to do something, I must make believe."

"Take your chances then," said Paddie. "I'm glad you are in love. There's no make-believe about that. There, at last, you are absolutely sincere, and you can save your manhood. Good-by."

"Good-by. I'll smoke and go to bed, get up and hear the lark sing and see the flowers; but I won't spend a moment on theology, though it is the skeleton in my closet."

"How many a man," said Paddie to Charlie and Will, as they walked home, "is bothered, perplexed, and half a man, like Jimmy, unable to use their nature to the utmost. It is the tragedy of many a life. He is fortunate, because he has a love that fills his soul and from whence he can work; but, without Milly, he would be a wreck again, I fear."

"Love is the real religion of the universe," said Will. "Jimmy has that, and so far he's safe. Love and truth work together, even though they seem to clash."

"We'll find our good friend Bobbins tomorrow. He's jumped the fence entirely. Let's see what kind of clover he's in. Charlie, bid good-by to Blanch for one day."

"I'll just go now and do it," said Charlie.

"Gooch was here again to-day," cried Blanche, "and made all sorts of inquiries. I don't like him. I wish he'd keep away. I think him capable of some great villainy. I think he has the very devil's look."

"He can't touch you, even if he were the devil."

"I dread him. I shrink from him with a strange horror. I hate his basilisk eyes."

"Don't see him again, then."

"I won't."

"Wouldn't it be a good plan to start for England and settle your family affairs?"

"I think so."

"You'll want somebody to help, so I'll go long in the capacity of a husband."

"How kind of you sir!" she said coquettishly. "Do you think I will consent?"

"I think nothing. I only hope."

"How submissive! I'm mistress now, but I fear you'll be master when I say 'yes.'"

"True love seeks no mastery, only service."

"Then I accept your service, and let me be mistress; for I can serve better that way."

"I believe it. By submitting, I have more than by commanding."

"How wise you are. Where did you learn all this?"

"In the Book of Love."

It was settled that next week they should start to England.

CHAPTER XX.

What a beautiful day it was! The sun filled the air with a soft and golden light that sparkled along the grass, touched the trees and flushed the clouds by the horizon with many a hue. Who can describe the flowers, the wealth of flowers, that spread about the travellers like a sea, with all colors, dashing and clashing in endless billows? It was the spring of the year, voluptuous and intense; and heaven and earth shown with the brilliancy of a fresh creation.

Light laughter filled the air, for everyone felt the glowing impulse of the day. Over the plain they went, and rejoiced in the thousand varied splendors that met their view, the signs of growth and opulence and power. The mighty wheat fields reached as far as the eye could see, and tossed and rolled in a profusion of verdant waves. Bobbins' house, unpretending but neatly kept, surrounded with massive barns, was in the midst of these richly laden lands. Bobbins was hardly recognizable by the jolly crowd, such a change had passed over him—he was so fat and sleek and comfortable. Every trace of the "miserable sinner" had disappeared. He was no longer dilapidated. He did not seem to be a "walking sepulchre," he did not advertise the world as a "dim vast vale of tears." Hell-fire was no longer at his tongue's end. When he discovered who were his guests, he was most cordial. A broad grin lighted up his whole face. In a great, loud voice, he said:—

"Come in. I've got something good for ye. It's most dinner-time. Pippins, you grow fatter and rounder every time I see you."

"I guess I do, and I mean to keep it up. I just enjoy this world, and mean to put as many square inches into it as possible. The more, the better."

"It does one good to see you looking so plump," said Paddie. "You are bigger than all your commentaries put together. You must have swallowed them."

"I didn't swallow them. I burned them. They were so dry that they made good kindling wood."

"How did ever this come about?" said Paddie. "You looked like a hardened saint, so thoroughly elected for the other world that I never