

## GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

"You feel that you have come out of darkness into light?"

"I guess I do! It's no comparison! I was in a cave before, and was an eyeless fish. I can truly say, I was once blind, but now I see. The books I read are a series of surprising revelations. I've read Parker some, and Emerson; and it seems as if I was roaming through a new world packed with precious jewels. There's a Down-East, queer sort of fellow I've happened across—Thoreau. He comes right from nature, right from the trees and rocks and the waters; and how keenly he describes! Then, I've a few sermons here by Frothingham, and some by Chadwick and Savage; and I revel in them as I would in nuggets of gold—such fresh, broad, beautiful views of man, of the universe, of what we are, despite our ignorance of whence we came or whither we are going! I do wish every Christian could know what a fool he is and how much he loses by believing those old wives' tales."

"Why don't you turn missionary and preach to them?"

"That's not my forte. I'd rather work. I just like to dig. I like to be among the cattle and horses and the pigs. I enjoy the life that is in them, and believe that labor is the great reformer of the world."

"I suppose so," said Paddie. "Still, thought is necessary, and education. There are those who must help us think and feel our best. Then, work becomes most noble; otherwise, it might be a drudgery."

"True," said Farmer Bobbins. "Every man to his taste; and now dinner. Here's my wife, friends; here's the table, and I like each man to help himself."

A royal dinner they had, for a royal appetite they had, and Mrs. Bobbins knew a thing or two about cooking.

"Did your wife get converted along with you, Bobbins, and join the Church of Humanity?"

"Not exactly. She clung to the old notions. I didn't argue with her. I told her my experience with Ingersoll. She laughed, but said nothing. When we first came out here, she went to the prayer-meetin' pretty regular. But she doesn't go now, and I notice she likes to read my books. You know women want to have their own way about things. she'll convert herself much quicker than I can."

"Don't the ministers try to convert you?"

"Oh, yes, since I've got rich. They didn't seem to care about it before. They come here by shoals. I just feed them, and let them go. You ought to see them feed. It's fun. Nobody can eat like a minister: he has an appetite like a whale. Why, I frequently cook a

whole chicken for some poor devil of a minister, and he eats it all up. Well, it's the only comfort they do have in this world, and I don't blame them for making the most of it. I don't begrudge any minister a square meal. He shall have one every time he comes here. I find that's the best way to shut his mouth."

Bobbins showed them his stock, and took them through his waving fields of grain, with all the ardor of a boy. Pippins enjoyed his visit to the utmost. These two "saints" converted into "sinners" made a very entertaining couple. It was a constant surprise to them that there was so much enjoyment in this sphere, independent of any other. They had so long looked upon this world as a dreamy spot that, when they found what riches it contained, they were almost intoxicated with delight. It was like a couple of starving men finding a rich and unexpected repast.

"What a happy time it will be, when the whole world is saved that way!" said Charlie, as they went back to the city.

"Yes, wake up and get rid of this night-mare," said Paddie. "I suppose this good time is coming, but people are so stupid."

"It may come all at once. Who would have thought that Bobbins would have waked up and gone to work like a man? I can't help laughing, when I think of his tussle with Ingersoll, and how demurely he walked away."

"We expected to conquer," said Pippins. "We prayed I don't know how many days and nights, and read the commentaries and studied Hebrew till our heads ached. We thought we were fully armed and equipped. What fools we were! We had a chain of argument that nobody could get around; but, when we came to hitch it, we had nothing to hitch it to, and there is where we got floored, and all we could do was to lug our chain back again and hang ourselves. But we did better. We took a new start, and then our chain of logic led us right where Ingersoll is."

"You must have found it pretty tough work in your theological career?"

"I did. I had to wear old clothes and board myself, and was generally half-starved. But I thought Jesus would pay me, and so I stood it. I taught in Sunday-school, and went around preaching here and there in school-houses, farm-houses and broken-down churches; and once in a while I'd make out to get up a revival, then I'd live high for a spell. I'd have mince pies and plum puddings along with my roast beef, while the excitement lasted. Generally, however, it was poor pay, and, if I must say it, damn poor preach also. I wonder now that I ever acted so like a confounded dunce."

"You've a chance now to make it up, and that's better than with those who've been humbugged all their lives, and expect to have big pay for it out of the celestial bank. They don't know that its notes are protested and its vaults empty."

"I will make it up," said Pippins. "This is a comfortable world, after all, even if we have to work for a living. I have to keep at it twelve hours a day. That's too long, but even with that I enjoy life. There's nothing like taking hold and pushing things along and bearing your part. That's my destiny, and I glory in it. I can't do good in any other way."

The great city was affame with myriad lamps as they approached. Charlie and Will hastened to their lodgings. Charlie was eager to call upon Blanche, and have a little chat about his day's visit. There was a note awaiting him. He tore it open hastily, and persued it. He stood like one transfixed by some sudden pain.

"Am I awake?" said he. "What is this? What does it mean?"

Again, he read the note carefully, while his whole frame trembled.

"Oh, curse her, curse her!" he cried.

"What is it?" said Will.

"That is it." And he flung the note upon the floor. "She would have been more merciful, if she had stabbed me to the heart with a dagger."

"There's nothing wrong here," said Will, as he picked up the note and read:—

MR. CHARLES MORTON:—

It pains me to write that I must not see you again. I have changed my plans. It is not necessary for me to inform you in what respect. Please do not seek me. I shall not be at home. It is all right; and, whatever may have been between us, let it be forgotten.

BLANCHE KENNEDY.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I loved her so much!" cried Charlie. "How can I endure it, this bitter, bitter disappointment! What does this mean? Could she have loved me? It seems as if I should go mad. Oh, love is so beautiful, and so terrible when it flees away! Why did she not let me alone? Now, she has crushed me. I am like one accursed."

"I cannot see through this," said Will. "There's something behind. We must see Blanche at once."

"I cannot see her," said Charlie. "She has wronged me; for she has deceived me, and she has murdered my soul."

"Bear up like a man, Charlie. You don't know what it is yet."

"Don't know? Yes, I do. I have been the sport of a cruel, reckless woman. She is tired of me sooner than she thought. She wants to be rid of me without ceremony. I will not trouble her."

"But I shall," said Will. "I don't take things on trust. I believe in going to the bottom. She must explain. If you won't go, I will."

"As you like. It's nothing to me. I know what I should do. In an hour, I will forget her."

Will hurried off to see Blanche, while Charlie remained to endure his torments as best he might.

"I cannot forget her," said Charlie. "I cannot. Fool, fool that I am! O—woman, why are you so vain? Why do you smile and stab? I could not have believed it. Only a little while ago, she was the star, the glory of my life. How I worshipped her, shining before me with cloudless beauty! Now, she is like the blasting orb of death. Through storm and rain, with bitter arrows, she drives me to despair."

O manhood, how little you seem when love strikes you! A woman's hand is stronger than a giant's. I could meet death yet I cannot meet this blow. It is horrible, so horrible."

Will returned.

"What news?" gasped Charlie.

"Her housekeeper says she has gone to England. But she is puzzled, and declares there is something wrong about it. Blanche went out yesterday as usual. About noon, the housekeeper received a telegram that her mistress was detained. About dark, there came a note that Miss Kennedy had departed for England. I have the note with me. Is that Blanche's handwriting?"

"It is," said Charlie. "She says she leaves at once, and desires things to be kept in order until she returns. Was there ever such a freak?"

"I think you are a bit blind," said Will. "I don't think that's her handwriting."

"What a fool you are!" said Charlie. "I have her notes and letters. Compare them. Don't they look alike? What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking they are very skillful forgeries."

"Bill, what is the matter with you—trying to ease things off? But you can't do it."

"You are wrong, Charlie, utterly wrong. You are hasty as you were once before. You didn't give Blanche a fair chance. How do you know but this is some plot, and that she you love is in danger and needs your manhood?"

"Pshaw, that's nonsense. I know better. I've seen too much of woman. They are heartless things. What does she care for me, a poor miner?"

"She cares everything for you. I've seen her, and I trust her. She has a noble heart. I would not yield her thus lightly. I'd go through fire, but I would know the truth. I would not desert her on such evidence as this."