

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

as you like."

"I shall not consent to any such thing," said the deacon.

"Then we will make you," said Charlie, fiercely.

"I don't think you can. I appeal to the captain for protection. I only ask my rights."

"By what right do you drag this lady away by force?"

"I have not done so," responded the deacon.

"I accuse you of this crime, and I will compel you to justice."

"It is no crime. I took the lady you speak of, because I had a right so to do."

"Do you speak of Blanche Kennedy?"

"I do."

"And wherefore have you done this?"

"She is my wife."

"Your wife? Liar! villain! do you dare this?" shouted Charlie. "Take those words back, or I'll fling you over the ship."

"Not while I'm here," said Sockdolliger. "I'm going to see fair play. If Gooch has committed any crime, I give him up."

"He has abducted a young lady from her home. Isn't that crime enough?"

"Certainly. All I want is the proof. Let the lady speak for herself."

"I object," said the deacon. "The lady is my wife. I can speak for her."

"Imposter!" cried Charlie; and he tried to seize the deacon. Sockdolliger laid his heavy hand upon him.

"Hold on, young man," he said, "not so fast. I can attend to this matter. Deacon, give us the documents, and it's all right. Otherwise I'll pitch you over myself."

The deacon produced a copy of a San Francisco paper, in which, to the amazement of Charlie and his friends, was a notice of Gooch's marriage to Blanche Kennedy. He also produced a certificate of marriage. Everything was apparently correct.

"That settles it," said Sockdolliger. "The deacon's right. The lady belongs to him. I don't see how anybody can interfere."

"Won't you let the woman speak for herself?"

"Of course not, unless the husband allows it," said Sockdolliger.

"That's according to Scripture. The husband is the head of the wife, and speaks for the wife."

"There's a great wrong committed."

"I don't see it. The documents are legal. These are married people."

"Do you suppose that we are going to submit to this nonsense?"

said Charlie."

"You must, so far as I'm concerned. The Good Book says that wives must submit to their husbands. I will not promote a family quarrel. Gooch is master in this case, and his word is law."

"Whoever heard of such a thing?"

"It's the law, and that's all I know," said Sockdolliger. "This is a legal marriage, and after marriage woman has nothing to say. The Bible commands her to keep silence."

"Can't you let her speak in her own defense? Perhaps the marriage was not altogether legal; surely you are willing to hear testimony."

"I should of course be willing to hear testimony, if I thought there was any doubt of the legality of the marriage."

"Why shouldn't there be a doubt? I claim that force and fraud were used, and I dare this devilish old hypocrite to confront his victim face to face."

"I've no objections if the deacon's willing," said Sockdolliger.

"I cannot consent under the circumstances," said Gooch. "For my wife is not very well, and such a shock might be dangerous. I have the certificate of two physicians that her mind is somewhat diseased and that she needs the tenderest care. Here, captain, you can read for yourself."

The captain read the instrument, and surely everything was made out satisfactorily.

"These physicians visited her not an hour before our voyage," said the deacon; "and this is what they report. Am I not right in keeping my wife secluded? Why should I bring her forth to be subjected to the rude scrutiny of these men? I do not know what they want,—her money perhaps,—but I care for her soul. I am interested in her immortal welfare. I married her in order to save her, to bring her to the fountain filled with blood. I read the Bible to her and the catechism, and try by prayer to soothe her perturbed spirit. You accuse me of wrong. You are mistaken and have no proof. I have the proof on my side. She is my wife. She belongs to me. Moreover, she is an invalid, and doubly under my protection. She cannot testify for herself. She has been declared insane, and therefore she can give no evidence. I am her guardian in the eyes of the law. You have no rights that can be respected. You are outlaws, and you are infidels."

"Is there no way to blast this sham?" said Charlie.

"What an infernal cunning!" said Paddie. "An admirable piece of devilry! I begin to respect the deacon. He certainly has brains."

"I don't suppose that you are carried away by this sophistry," said Charlie to Sockdolliger. "You must have some common sense. This is all a subterfuge, that can be destroyed in a moment, if you will bring the woman to front this man and speak her own words. It is not law merely, it is justice that we seek. You can tell whether this woman is crazy or not, and whether her story is true. You cannot have any regard for the flimsy pretensions of this man, who under the garb of religion, is endeavoring to perpetrate a horrible crime."

"I am willing to leave it with you, cap'n," said the deacon, with a cunning leer. "I take my stand simply upon the Bible. I believe in it. These men do not, and therefore you cannot trust them. I am working for the Lord. I am trying to save a soul. My poor wife would be lost if I did not protect her. I plant myself upon the law and the documents. Here they are. They have the seal of the State upon them. I am the representative of my wife. I know what is best for her spiritual and temporal welfare. She is in the eyes of the law a cipher, and it is her husband who must act in her stead. This is what the church says and I am sure, cap'n, that you will not set yourself against the decrees of the Church and the texts of holy Scripture."

"I shall stand by you, deacon," said Sockdolliger. "Your claim is valid; your wife belongs to you. And as a good Christian, she ought to submit. If she is not a Christian I am quite confident you will endeavor to make her one, and thus save her from everlasting damnation. I believe in the Bible and I believe in law, and what the law makes right is right. I was never taught any different. The scriptures say that we must submit to the powers that be, for they are ordained of God."

"Do you intend," said Charlie, almost overcome with surprise and indignation,— "do you intend to permit this outrage, to let this woman be the helpless prey of this man, who has torn her from her home that he may rob her at his will? Can it be that you, born in a land of freedom, beneath that flag, can tolerate such an insult to justice? What are you thinking of?"

"Young man," said Sockdolliger. "You don't know what you are talking about. You talk of freedom and justice; what are they, except you are first on the side of the law. So long as you are in a state of nature, nothing is right with you, and you don't understand what duty is. Marriage is a sacred thing, and it binds the woman to the man; and the man

is the head, he is the master, he is the same as Christ to that woman. She has nothing to say and she must do as he commands. I cannot interfere between this husband and wife. 'What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.' I have confidence in Gooch; for he prays every day, and he reads the Holy Word. And I am sure that this poor woman will find refuge; but, whether she does or not, she belongs to him, and that settles it. You can't see her, nor you can't take her from this ship."

"But I will," said Charlie. "I don't leave but with her. Out of my way!"

Charlie pushed ahead. The deacon was like a straw before him. But it was different with the sturdy Captain Sockdolliger. He was a Hercules in strength, and it was simply impossible for Charlie to cope with him. He backed up his Scripture interpretations with enormous physical prowess.

"Stand back! You can't go down. I command this ship. My word is law."

"Then, I'll stay here. I won't leave the ship. You can't get rid of me, unless you kill me."

"Yes, we can. We can fling you overboard. I don't want you on board this ship. The sooner you go the better."

"I won't go," said Charlie.

"I'll make you."

"Try it."

Sockdolliger, strong as he was, didn't feel like trying it; for Charlie was so furiously angry that it was dangerous to grapple with him, even though one had vastly superior strength.

So they stood confronting each other like lions at bay. Both were in dead earnest. Sockdolliger was simply acting out his conviction. He was conscientious in all he said and did, and it was this which made him such a mighty antagonist to deal with.

"I won't leave this ship," said Charlie. "She is here, in danger and distress. I should be a coward to leave her."

"I don't see any other course," said Paddie. "The deacon has the grip on us this time and we must retreat. The captain is absolute master here. We can't use coercion; we must use our brains. Gooch is playing a skilful game with his devilish long head. There's a way out of this, I know. But we must take a new start, and think deeply. There was never anything worked by human ingenuity that cannot be circumvented by human ingenuity. Let's go back and find out how to do it."

"This is so hard," said Charlie,—"to be so near, yet not to see her or to save her! Oh, the cruelty of law that can be made the instrument of awful tyranny! Overland and sea, it reaches its arm for the