

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

it was a thing of life and death. The more he thought of it, however, the more easy the feat appeared of accomplishment. Why not? Daring ones had already plunged into the bosom of the deep and walked through its mysterious chambers. He could do it also.

But to communicate with Blanche,—this was the next step; and would she dare to give herself up to the awful and tremendous embrace of that monster whose arms encircled continents and in whose breast were ten thousand voracious slayers of man?

"I must trust to my star, my destiny, whatever it is," he said, "that helps us when we can no longer help ourselves. I will do all I can,—dare the billows and the image of death, and deserve success, even if I do not win it. To-night I must take the key of freedom to Blanche. If she accepts it, she shall find me by the open door to save her from every peril."

He wrote as follows.—

Dear Blanche,—I have followed you. Your enemy has woven a strange web, and we must resort to desperate measures to release you. How careless I have been! Why did I leave you! Forgive me, and trust me for all that mortal man can do to save you from the clutches of this fiend. You are aware of the power he professes to have over you, and with what cunning he wields it. We were on board your ship to-day. I asked to see you and demanded your liberty, but was denied on the ground that you were the legal wife of Gooch. I do not know how he managed to possess you. This will be discovered hereafter. But to our means of escape. The way seems perilous, and yet with courage I think there is no doubt of success. At any rate, we must dare fate, if we would win freedom. In this letter, you will find a powder. Take it, and it will put you into a deep sleep, so like the semblance of death that it will be taken for death and you will be buried in the sea. Do you shrink from this? I shall be in the sea to bear you to a place of safety. There is a doctor with me of great genius and learning; and he has invented sea-armors, in which we can clothe ourselves and walk through the sea, and remain in it from three to four hours. I have examined the armors, and am satisfied that we can use them. The doctor himself is bold beyond measure, and will accompany me in my ocean journey. Such is the outline. On our part there will be no failure. I will not urge, for it is a fearful undertaking. Your lover is ready for anything. If you do not venture this plan, know that I shall follow you unto deliverance. Take council with your best and bravest heart and hope, and do

that which you believe to be for your honor and liberty.

Yours lovingly,

Charles.

The doctor furnished Morton with an india-rubber casket in which to inclose the letter and the powder.

"You can swim a thousand miles, and they will be uninjured. If you can get these into her hands, all is well. That is for you to accomplish; and I must say you are a very poor lover, if you don't do it. I know science by experiment. I know love only by speculation, but I know that it is even more potent than science. There is nothing that it cannot do. It has made and unmade armies. It has built and destroyed empires. It has traversed the wide world and flung its roses over many a wilderness. It has borne the fainting soul through a thousand deserts. It has touched many a rock, and the sparkling fountains have burst forth. The lover is the hero. He descends to hell, and he climbs to heaven. Love has belted the earth with jewels. Love is the only immortal over death. I know that you will touch the hand of your mistress; for, if you love her, nothing can keep you apart. I bring thee science; but what would my cunning be without thy burning heart of love?"

CHAPTER XXV.

The sea was still as glass. The stars shone above; and, jewelled in the depths, they seemed to have an added brilliancy. One would think that beneath the shining surface there were but beauty and glory, lustrous halls where the spirit might forever revel in delight.

Morton dropped into the sea. He was a strong swimmer, and could easily make his way from the "Albatross" to the "Betsy Jane," which was lying only half a mile off. It was midnight when he undertook his perilous journey. There was hardly a sound on board the ship as he neared it. He was pretty certain as to where Blanche was located; for in his intense watching, hour by hour during the previous day, he had caught the flutter of a white handkerchief, and, whether rightly or wrongly, had interpreted this as a signal from his mistress.

Silently, he floated under the bows of "Betsy Jane," and in a low, soft voice began to sing,—so low and soft that the superstitious sailor might imagine that it came out of the depths of the sea, from the lips of some mermaid. The song that he sang was the wild Scottish melody taught him by Blanche, and the words were of her own composing. He remembered them; and the notes and the words held in his heart burst forth beneath the window of Blanche's cabin:—

"Love tosses on a darkling sea,  
Where wild winds breathe their melody.  
The rolling billows give no rest;  
Love finds the same within its breast;  
And so it yearns for some sweet shore,  
Where life shall bloom for evermore."

"Love like a pilgrim roams afar,  
And watches every changing star,  
And gathers every radiant flower  
And sees it fade with summer's hour;  
And so it yearns for that deep home,  
Where nothing fades and naught doth roam."

I wonder if Sockdolliger or Gooch heard that song, as, like a timid bird, it crept and then flew into Blanche's room. If they did, they little realized its meaning,—that it was a subtle link whereby two lovers talked, in spite of the rude impediments which the bigotry of the one and the rascality of the other had imposed. Ah, love can laugh at chains indeed! Deprived of common speech, it voices itself in a language of its own.

The song mingled harmoniously with the slow rocking of the ship; but, when it reached the ear of love, how quickly it detached itself, and seemed to be the only melody in the universe!

As Morton lay floating on the glistening deep, over him he saw the flash of a delicate white hand and the billowing signal of a fluttering handkerchief. With a quick motion, he seized the ropes of the ship, and touched the hand with a passionate kiss and whispered, "Courage!" and left in its clinging, burning fingers the package with the letter and powder, and quickly and silently dropped into the sea, and did not rise to the surface until he was a hundred feet away. Not the sharpest sentinel could have known that there was any communication with the imprisoned lady.

Blanche sank back into her bed, and pressed the packet to her lips. The last few days had been to her full of despair and agony, yet she had borne herself with wonderful courage and patience. She knew at intervals that she was the victim of some diabolical scheme; but the deacon kept her helpless and in a wandering and dreamy state of mind by the use of powerful drugs. She knew that she could escape this torture only by silence and apparent indifference, and she had summoned all her fortitude to the task; so that now that her mind is comparatively clear. Gooch had not deemed it necessary while she was on board the ship, and Sockdolliger was his bulwark, to keep her in a state of semi-insanity. He had not dared or perhaps not cared to insult her womanhood. What he wanted mainly was her fortune; and this he was willing to acquire by any easy-going or peaceable measure.

Blanche slept alone with her maid, who was a paid tool of Gooch. This attendant was now in a profound slumber, and by the faint light of a candle Blanche was able to peruse the letter.

"It is as I thought," she said; "and this is the only way of escape. I am not afraid. I could do anything. I had rather be in the depths of the sea than here; and he will be there, he will be there, and I

shall be safe. If I do not survive, my last resting-place will be in his arms. Let me read this letter again."

Again she read the letter, and pressed it to her lips, and then she tore it into a thousand pieces and flung them from her window, and, like flakes of snow, they sank into the bosom of the sea.

"Hold these thoughts, O sea," she said. "I will come, and trust thy billows. O love, I will seek thee, even in darkness and death."

She looked at the powder white and glistening in its tiny wrapper. "This little powder is stronger than the sword of kings. Not a thousand can keep me from thee, when I take this."

She took a glass and partly filled it with water, and then poured in the sparkling powder and stirred the mixture, and held up it to the light.

"More glorious than wine, O liquid savior! I drink to my immortal love."

Having drunk the potion, from her narrow window she looked forth upon the boundless sky.

"Farewell, O stars! You are shining upon my tomb. Grant that it may be my path to victory. O softly sounding sea, I long for your embrace! Thy glorious baptism shall give me new life."

With that, she wrapped "the drapery of her couch about her, and lay down to pleasant dreams."

"I have accomplished it," said Charlie, as he leaped to the deck of the "Albatross." "Now it depends upon her courage. Will she dare to do it?"

"Never fear that," said the doctor. "Woman is braver than man in such circumstances. They are afraid of nothing when love prompts."

"I suppose I ought to go to bed and sleep," said Charlie; "but I can't, I am so agitated. I must prepare for to-morrow. We can't depend entirely upon the spirit. The body must be in its best condition for such a trial as this."

"Yes, everything depends on your steadiness and nerve. Take this powder. It is not so strong as the other; but you will not wake until noon, and then you will be refreshed. We must all go to bed."

In a little while, Morton with the rest was in profound slumber.

Morning came, and still the calm rested upon the waters.

At ten o'clock, Captain Furgeson and Will and Paddie went over to the "Betsy Jane." There was an unusual excitement on board.

"The deed is done said Furgeson. "They are preparing for a burial."

Sockdolliger greeted them with a most sorrowful countenance.

"We need not quarrel any more," he said; "it's all over, the lady is dead."

"Dead?" said Furgeson. "How did it happen?"

"It's a dispensation of provi-