

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

imagined himself an object of divine favor. Some are so accustomed to their villany that it ceases to be villany in their eyes, but rather justifiable, if not found out and fortune favors. Gooch had intended after he had obtained possession of Blanche's fortune, to endow a theological seminary; and this end justified the means. He had thoroughly identified "God" with everything that was for his self-interest. He read the bible through the eyes of his own lust: the whole plan of salvation from all eternity was an arrangement by which Gooch could be made happy. He never thought of it in any other light: the command to leave father and mother and brother and sister was simply authority to let these take care of them selves, so far as material things are concerned, while he could be free to devote himself to securing a harp of gold.

This was the sum and substance of Gooch's religion, a harp of gold. If the harp had been brass, I don't think he would have been quiet so good a Christian. Gold, gold,—this was the all-devouring aim of his life; and Bible and Church and regeneration were valuable to him only as they converge so this end. He was ready to do anything for its sake, and he had the wonderful facility of thinking that all he did for himself he did for the Lord. Hence, he could commit a crime without a qualm of conscience. He was as cold as a lizard. Nothing could touch him. The apparent death of Blanche had no perceptible effect. He did not care for her only as she was an instrumentality to the acquirement of wealth; and, since her death gave him more complete sway, he had only a mechanical and outside sorrow in view of it.

"The burial will be at two o'clock this afternoon," said Sockdolliger. "Will you remain, gentlemen?"

"Yes," said Paddie and Will.

"I must return," said Captain Furgeson.

"It's all over with," said Paddie to the deacon after Furgeson had departed for his own ship, "and there's no need of quarrelling; but, really, I do not understand your marriage. It was sudden, wasn't it?"

Paddie was somewhat of a diplomatist, and he was determined to find out a thing or two.

"It was rather sudden," said the deacon, "but it was kind o'natural, after all. We were cousins. My mother was a Kennedy. You see there was a big fortune in England for the Kennedys, and I reckon to come into it through my mother's rights; but she was an heir after William and Ralph Kennedy, and I found by inquiry that Miss Blanche was the heir of both. You see there was a conflict. I thought the best way to settle the matter

was to marry Blanche. There'd be no lawsuit then, and we could both enjoy the fortune."

"Did Blanche accede to this arrangement?"

"She didn't understand it as well as I did, but finally I persuaded her."

"But the fortune was hers anyway."

"Yes, legally. I could have made trouble, though; for it didn't seem right to come so near having a fortune and not have it. You see, if she had been dead, the fortune would have been mine."

"So you thought you would kill her by marrying her?"

"I was willing she should live; but I knew she didn't need the money, and wouldn't use it for the glory of the Lord as I would. I'm sorry she's dead, but I acted for the best."

"You'll go to England then?"

"Yes, there's about a million dollars coming. I shall give a hundred thousand to the Church."

"Didn't you know that Morton was engaged to Blanche?"

"I rather thought so; and I felt it my duty to save her. Morton wouldn't give a cent of money to the Church. I married her, in order that the Lord might get her money. It wasn't for myself that I cared, but for the welfare of Zion. Our church at Scooptown needs a new bell; and the people talk of starting a missionary seminary there, in order to educate the young men to preach the gospel to the heathen, and I was anxious to endow a professorship. You see how much good I can do with the money."

"Did Blanche think as you did?"

"Not exactly, but I think she would in time. She seemed to hate me and religion and everything that was good. She was wilful. I made out by the exercise of a parental authority to marry her. Gradually, she was becoming subdued. She seemed to feel the force of my remarks. If she had lived, I think she would have become a bright and shining light."

"What a phenomenal hypocrite the deacon is!" said Paddie to Will, as they sauntered alone to the ship's side. "He can cover rascality with the slime of his theology, and swallow it whole. He could easily convince himself that it was right to kill you or me, if by so doing five cents could be put into the treasury of the Lord."

"He is that monstrous thing," said Will, "which only Orthodoxy can produce,—a hypocrite and rogue, who finds in the pages of an inspired book justification for every act he can commit. Of all crime, inspired crime is the worst. It has no conscience, and it is incapable of remorse. It can wield the knife of the assassin, and glory in the deed. Does not Orthodoxy justify even murder for the glory of its God?"

Is it strange, then, that the greatest acts of wrong-doing should take upon them a divine sanction, and appear meritorious? This innate savagery of Orthodoxy breaks out at times, and we see its terrible result in the red hand of murder, a father slaying his own child. This is the legitimate result of the old belief in miracles and inspiration. It is softened and defeated, I grant, in many noble and beautiful natures, that, clinging to Orthodoxy with a sort of intellectual blindness and weakness, are yet trained and developed by higher ideas. They do walk somewhat in the light of science. But in wholly ignorant minds we see the logic of Orthodoxy; and what is it but murder and assassination, finding its impulse in a so-called divine voice, within which is only the name for a fierce animal passion. The Bible has justified every crime; and it needs no stretch of logic for a man like Gooch, intensely selfish, to find authority for any wrong that will improve his chances, and so add to the coffers of his divinity. I expect that Gooch believes himself to be a sort of ambassador of God, and so is capable of committing any crime in his Deity's name. Christianity should not disown Gooch, when at last the halter is drawn about his neck. He is the creature of its own teachings."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Captain Furgeson returned to the "Albatross," and reported the situation of affairs.

"I'm ready," said the doctor. "Morton will be awake in a few minutes, and in prime condition. We couldn't have a better day. The sea is as clear as glass, and we can walk through it as easily as through a meadow. The machinery is fixed, and you know how to give us air. Work slow and sure."

Morton was soon awake. When told, he cried:—

"Is it possible? How brave she is! Now, we must show our spirit; and all will be well."

"Keep cool," said the doctor. "We must not hurry. Put your suit on."

The grotesque suits were put on, and Morton and the doctor looked like a couple of immense ghouls with enormous eyes.

"You see, I've arranged a little compass in your hand, and so can direct our course. We shan't fail to strike the 'Betsy Jane' by the shortest path. Then, I've a few torpedoes tucked away; and, if bigger fish than we attack us, we can give them more than they bargain for with these little cannon."

Morton went to his task with a determined spirit. He had not a particle of fear, and he would not allow himself to be disturbed even by the momentous results that might happen. Placed in such new and strange circumstances, about to un-

dertake what had never yet been accomplished even by the most daring, he faced the tremendous journey with scarcely a tremor. He meant to succeed, if it lay within human power; and he knew that only the utmost steadiness could carry him safely along.

All was ready; and they were lowered into the sea, and sank into its profound bosom. The waters closed over them, and not a ripple was seen.

They were in the awful depths. They could communicate with each other only by slow and awkward signs. Down they sank, until they were a hundred feet below the surface. Above, they could behold a confused and most dazzling light, and occasionally coruscating colors with infinite variety of movement. Fishes glided by, and hardly seemed to notice them, any more than if they were familiar monsters of the sea. Around them rolled ever the thunder of the deep. Slowly, very slowly, they advanced, as if they were climbing an immense hill. The route appeared interminable, for there was nothing by which to mark the way. The doctor, however, advanced as if guided by an unerring instinct. He seemed to be at home amid the untravelled waters. As he turned to his companion, his eyes looked like two blazing balls. He was like a huge giant hewing his way through the liquid wilderness. Morton followed his firm step. He met all the horrors of the deep with unflinching gaze.

At length, the doctor signalled a halt. They rose by pressing the air-valves, and found that they were just beneath the "Betsy Jane," which like a great planet rolled and heaved in the midst of a sheet of light. The top of the sea flashed over them like a brilliant firmament; and intense and splendid hues chased each other with myriad evolutions, while beneath stretched an awful and unsounded darkness. Here they remained, waiting for the prize to drop from the sparkling firmament above.

All on board the "Betsy Jane" gathered to listen to the funeral service. Burnham and McConnell were there, watching with intent gaze the silent form, wondering if indeed the spirit were in the mask or in the reality of death, so veritable it all seemed and so like a dream.

Captain Sockdolliger read the burial service, the grotesque yet wonderfully eloquent passages from St. Paul. It must be admitted that he read them with solemn and beautiful effect, for he profoundly believed every word that he uttered. He had undoubting faith in the resurrection of the body,—that all would come forth from the sea and land some day at the trump of the archangel, and Christ would appear in the glory of heaven, and