

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

earn his brightest blessing."

"No, he only earns the lower good. The best comes by what we call chance."

"Can you explain this?"

"I cannot. It isn't at all reasonable, but it's so."

"Then what's the use of working?"

"To put yourself in the way of chance. If you don't work, you won't be lucky."

"But some work and work, and are not lucky."

"Too true! but if they didn't work they would have no better luck. So, they might as well work."

"And might as well die, some of them. Reward is so poor that life is worthless."

"Everyone can't draw a prize."

"Alas for our stars! if they refuse to shine we must suffer the ignominy of failure, I suppose; assume the responsibility of what we can't help; and that's what fate is."

"This is too tragical," cried Paddie. "Let's laugh and grow fat, and not think ourselves into nonentities."

"It's your luck to laugh and grow fat. If you were not born to it you couldn't do it."

"A good reason! Let who can give a better. Whatever we are born to that we must be. So what's the use of vexing one's self?"

"Because, if one is born to vexation, he must also fulfil that law. Now, how can you answer that?"

"I can't, because I wasn't born to answer it. My native wit fails me."

"Admirable answer, the very acme of philosophy! When all men answer thus the problem of the universe will be solved,—which is, that ignorance is bliss."

"Ignorance of what?"

"Of things in themselves. What we want to know is not what things are, but how to use them."

"Can we use them to best advantage without knowing what they are?"

"When may we not? That is what science is always doing. She wisely forbears to go behind the veil. She sees the light and color, and weaves them into dazzling forms; and so life is beautiful. But the force she works with is still unexplainable."

"Shall we call it only 'force?' Is there not a better name?"

"Perhaps not, for names are but definitions; and definitions, when we come to the ultimate, are a failure."

"Is God a failure?"

"Yes, as a name, unless we apply it merely to our moods of mind. We say God rules when we are happy. When we are miserable we are not apt to believe in God at all."

"Can we not apply the word 'God' to the universe as a whole?"

"I think not, for it does not correspond to the reality. 'God'

means, if it means anything, our highest ideal of goodness. Now, that ideal is constantly checked as we go forth into the outward universe. There is evil, and we cannot explain it away. We do not and cannot know the universe as a whole, and therefore we cannot describe it either as good or bad."

"Will theism die out as not having a sufficient basis in fact?"

"No, because it was not born of fact, but simply of feeling. It is the child of imagination, the offspring of hope. It is a mental mood and not a demonstration. This mood will ever come and go, like sunny days over the stormy world. There will be many a glad height in our toilsome way, from whence nothing will be seen but beauty."

"Is theism false, because based on mere feeling?"

"Not false if we let it abide there; but false when we translate it into a proposition, and make it a dogma of words."

"Is there nothing that we can trust in?"

"Indeed there is. How million-fold greater is our happiness than our misery! As we follow the majestic course of the universe, how wonderful, how jubilant it all is! When we touch humanity and thrill with its life, what language can express our joy?"

"But if the comet plunges into the sun, and the sun's heat slays us, what then?"

"That's a long look ahead, and borrowing an immense amount of trouble. We may go to smash, of course; but what we have accomplished is a part of the universe, and lives in all its endless transformation. The future cannot change the present, which is glorious in itself. Our souls are great, not for what they will be, but for what they are. Thought is not of time or space, for it precedes them."

"Must we not, as Goethe says, live in the beyond? Today may be beautiful, but is it not more beautiful because we dream of a beautiful tomorrow?"

"That is indeed true, so we will dream, and hope, and be forward looking. We seek the impossible; and, seeking that, we achieve infinitely. Otherwise, we should do nothing at all."

Thus, thought, many-hued and bright, reflecting the thousand possibilities of life, flashed and found manifold expression amid this congenial society. No one endeavored to be consistent, but to be like the changing sea, whose restless billows sought ever new intensities of light, and poured forth marvels of color and miracles of song. Oh, how rich life can be when in exuberant motion we give ourselves to the ever-abounding glory of the universe, and through the infinities of feeling absorb and translate its continuous wonders!

It was apparently a cloudless blue as the captain swept the hori-

zon with his glass, but he muttered:

"It looks a bit squally over there. I hope we shall get round it. If it hits us, it'll knock us a good way off from San Francisco; and I'm in hopes to be there in a day or two."

"We are safe enough," said Paddie. "I don't see any bad signs."

"Wait an hour or so and you'll change your mind."

There did seem to come an inexplicable darkness into the scene, and a cold draught of air. Still, the sun was shining brightly.

"I don't like the looks of the waves," said the captain. "They glisten too much, and there are too many of them. See how they roll and tumble together. They look ugly. The clouds are beginning to gather."

They could see the clouds now, faint and fleecy, hurrying and scurrying along. The wind blew louder and more chill.

"We've got to take it. It's all around us, and it's a regular hurricane. No child's play, this," said the captain.

"It's time for a storm. We've had too pleasant weather for three or four days. Extremes meet, and now we've got to take the worst of it," said Paddie.

They furled the sails, but the wind blew so strongly that the ship sped on more swiftly than before. Thunder sounded in the distance, and the horizon became intensely black. Overhead the sun was just quivering forth with a lurid light.

"I'd rather see the sun out of sight than looking like that," said the captain.

Soon, the great volumes rolled over the sun and the waves dashed mightily, and the ship plunged forward like a wild horse.

"So far as I can judge, we are in mid-ocean; and, if we can stand the waves, we've nothing else to fear; we've a staunch vessel and it can leap from billow to billow, almost like a mermaid," said the captain.

It was a sublime and terrific scene. The whole atmosphere seemed to roar violently, the ship heaved and tossed, and the immense billows swept against it and seemed to grasp it with gigantic hands and hurl it on, and almost spin it around like a top. The darkness became intense, and still could be seen the phosphorescent glare of myriad crests that in mad ecstasy appeared to strike at the very heavens. The vivid lightning almost constantly revealed an awful theatre of action.

Then came a crash, and the waters almost swept the deck.

"By God, the rudder's broke, and now we must take it as we will!"

There was nothing to do except to wait until the fury of the storm was spent. It was no longer possible to guide the vessel.

On it dashed, climbing the great seas and sliding into the enormous depths. The waves towered above

it like mountainous walls, and the white foam, like a multitude of sprites, seem to fly about it, as if they would tear it to pieces, and then the ship would be lifted to the top and tremble on the verge of some precipitous chasm.

Then, a new and dazzling horror burst upon the vision.

A long line of rocks shot up all of a sudden. Gloriously, the waves dashed against them like a magnificent army, battalion upon battalion, to be shivered into gleaming fragments upon the intractable enemy.

"We are lost!" said the captain. "These are the rocks of Bell Isle. I know where I am now. We are driving right upon shore."

Calmly, they faced the dreadful peril. There was no praying. It was simple manhood meeting the inevitable.

"Blanche," said Charlie, "this looks like our last hour."

"Perhaps it is," said she. "The glory of it is that we die together. Is not that a sublime fate?"

"You are not afraid, then?"

"Afraid? Oh, no! Life is sweet; but we must die, and what we must do we cannot regret."

"Let us stand together, and let us face nature and witness with unclouded souls her grandest spectacle. We die royally, do we not, amid this thunder of the elements. See yonder promontory stretching into the sea! Its lofty head seems to touch the sky, and around its base now the seething seas toil, as if they would tear it away and hurl it into the abyss."

The grandeur of the scene was indescribable. The rocks loomed forth like an innumerable army of giants. Far away in the white glare of the billows and the vivid splendor of the lightning, they stretched sturdy and unyielding. To the left rose a high promontory, nearly 500 feet in height; and against it, as if with special fury, the squadrons of the ocean, rank on rank, dashed and foamed, and fell back in surging retreat. It was a glorious pageant. It made death seem like a wild joy among the intoxicating grandeurs of the scene.

The captain watched every movement of the ship, and scanned the shore constantly. He was a hard man to beat, even with all the elements against him.

"If we could round that point, we'd be safe," said he; "for there's smooth water, and we could land before the ship went to pieces. If the rudder wasn't broke, I could do it. Which way's the wind? West-sou'west just now. That's right! I'll take advantage of it. Boys, unfurl the sails, stretch every inch of canvass. The wind may blow us round that point, and then we can take another chance for life."

Swiftly and steadily, the men worked, the captain's wife amid them; and, spite of every difficulty, they set the sails to catch the breeze.