

GOLDEN THORNE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

differ from the church creed, but the church is more than a creed. It has been a life, a part of the moral progress of the race; and I say to myself, because I hate the creed, must I tear myself from the soul I love? Will not the creed perish, while the soul endures? It is with the innermost spirit of the church, as breathed by a thousand noble men and women in the centuries that are gone, that I agree; and, in spite of the dogmas, I would abide with that. So I cannot follow the cool dictates of my head. I cannot pack up my trunk and leave the old home with a formal good-by, for I cannot take all my inheritance with me. A thousand things I must leave behind. Of my own will, I cannot go. The church itself must take the responsibility, and thrust me forth. I do not desire martyrdom nor notoriety. My purpose is to let the church make the fiat of my departure. I have a right to do this, in order that ever after I may be certain of my course, and never cast one longing look behind. I ask the church to let me work in sincerity, just as I am, amid its dear associations. If it refuses, then from henceforth I am free, and the whole universe shall be my home."

"How does your wife take this change?"

"She is thorough orthodox, I believe. She was born and bred to it and never questioned it. I have not had an hour's talk with her on the subject. When I told her the issue was to be met, she was with me at once. I was indeed astonished. She has been, I think, most of her life, in a sort of a chrysalis state, her artistic nature brooding amid a stiff wrapping of outward orthodoxy. When the moment came for her real life to be manifested, then she flew forth, free from dogma, ready to enjoy all the glory of the new-found sky. She represents the slow and subtle progress of the artistic or purely poetic nature. The intellectual nature goes forth first; while art remains at home, and dwells in the order already attained. It dreads to go forth into the raw, rough world. It wants the comfortable fireside. But when the sturdy intellect, in spite of all obstacles, has built up a new world, more beautiful because more truthful, than the old, then art hastens to dwell therein. Do we not see how all literature, painting, sculpture, music, are freeing themselves from the trammels of the past, and drawing their noblest inspirations from fresh human needs and themes?"

"I think you had better come to dinner now," said the artist, bursting like a sunbeam into the study. "I know you have been discussing theology. It must make you hungry,

for it is the driest and boniest of subjects. It is neither meat nor drink."

"I am willing to give it up for a good steak," said Charlie.

"Yes, we will cheerfully go to the steak," said Jimmy. "We are willing martyrs there every time."

"Would that all discussion on theology had ended as comfortably as this!" said Will. "Why is it that theology makes men hate each other so?"

"Because they talk about what they don't know, and there is plenty of room for vanity and prejudice. What is theology but an infinite lumber-room of prejudice, pride, conceit, and all the idols that man is prone to worship? No wonder that it makes people crazy."

"Don't talk it in my presence then," said Milly. "I wonder that you men will bother about it. Women never think of such things. They are too sensible."

"That's a privilege of their birth," said Jimmy. "They are not expected to settle the problem of the universe, and so they can be happy. I do pity the born theologian. He makes himself and everybody else uncomfortable."

"This dinner is a good preparation for your martyrdom. You are better off than the old-time heretics."

"That shows the progress of the world. A hundred years ago or so, I should be in a dungeon instead of eating this delicious roast. I suppose Father Skinflint would like to see me roasted. But he was born to late."

"And you were born too early. A hundred years hence, your radical thought will be food for the conservative."

"Not necessarily. The purpose of radicalism will itself be served, when freedom of thought has become universal. When this is done, free thought can go no farther in this direction; for it will have accomplished that by which all other things may be accomplished. Radicalism and conservatism will then be succeeded by new terms, for we shall not need them. Liberty will be the universal state in which all minds can peacefully work; and liberty will employ new methods of science and thought, and new terms by which to enforce them. With such impulse and aids as these will give to future arts and inventions, what may we not expect? Under this horoscope, I confess that, for my own sake, I was born too early."

"Oh, yes! It is all wonderful," said Milly. "I begin to wish I hadn't been born yet awhile. So many discoveries are being made that we wonder what will happen next, and how we would find things a few hundred years hence. At any rate, we should find a few things the same. The beautiful endures, and I for one will seek that."

"I am afraid you are æsthetic. To seek simply the beautiful is not manly nor womanly, is it?"

"Why not? If, as you say, beauty and truth are united, then, if we earnestly seek the beautiful, we must find the true; and we find it in the best and most practical way."

"I grant that, to a certain extent. I suppose we must make beauty the supreme end; for, as Goethe says, beauty is the truth and something more. Yet we know not always what is beautiful, unless we first know what is true; and the most beautiful things come when we simply seek the true."

"The soul of art is, indeed, truth; but art manifests truth, and so becomes our teacher. And, through art, it seems to me, the highest ever comes. The poet tells us more than the mathematician."

"Yet the poet must be a truth-seeker. He must be a mathematician, or he cannot properly express his art. He must sing by measure."

"What he seeks finally is melody, not measure. In studying music, I must study the scale; but it's music that I'm after, and not mere technique. I think knowledge is useless, unless it can inspire."

"That may be so, yet our highest ideals spring from what we know."

"Perhaps not always. Sometimes our ideals precede our knowledge, and lead to it. The poet hears the song before he realizes its form."

"That's a bit transcendental. You can't prove it."

"Oh! you men always ask for proof. We women take things on trust. You like this plum pudding, I know; but you can't prove it."

"Except by eating, and I will agree to furnish the most ample proof."

"Well, the way we prove most things is by eating or using them."

"That's a good test. Anything that we can't eat or use is untrue."

"Now, you agree with me, and furnish a woman's reason. A thing is good because it is good."

"Then let me, like a woman, have the last word. Beauty is use, and use is beauty; and beauty and use make for us the truth. Our practical life is the best revelation that we have. As the proof of the pudding is in the eating, so the proof of every theory lies in what can be accomplished by it. The universe is a blank until it becomes expressed in our personal work."

"I will answer in music," said Milly. "And then you won't complain of my tongue. A little Chopin will prepare you for your evening's entertainment, the ecclesiastical council, where dogs delight to bark and bite."

She played the sweet, fantastic strains of Chopin, which so wonderfully express the pathetic and mystic side of human life. Music is the veritable voice of the infinite, which in its essence can be sounded

only through melody. That which words have vainly tried to exhibit is brought to us in the inexpressible tone-colors of music. The wondrous blending of sounds, the intricate harmonies, the tossing to and fro and mingling together of delicate strains and massive movements, — these manifest, as no splendor of thought can manifest, the limitless soul of the universe. Music is forever the prophet of man's undying glory.

She closed with a little of Wagner, whose strains like a sea of fire seem to whirl in tumultuous wreck, yet anon ending like a benediction. This was music by which one could scold the tyrants and fools that rule by custom and not by sense.

"The shades of eve are falling fast." I must take my banner and go forth and cry, 'Excelsior.' I suppose by morning I shall be lying at the foot of the icy Alps of Orthodoxy, all my youthful enthusiasm quenched. Come on! As Luther says, 'Though a thousand devils were in the way, I won't turn back.'"

CHAPTER XXXI.

Demorest was obliged to meet the issue at last, in spite of his reserve. The conflict was irrepressible. There is too much deadly antagonism of thought. The old will not allow itself to be calmly supplanted by the new. It clings tenaciously to life. Things may go smoothly for awhile, and the new ideas play nicely into the vacancies of the ancient doctrine; but, sooner or later, some vital point is touched, and the glare of battle awakes, and disruption takes the place of softly gliding evolution.

The ecclesiastical council was convened to try him. The church was crowded to its utmost capacity. There were about a hundred ministers present; a queer looking company. As Ingersoll says, they represented the "salvage" of the intellectual life of the age. Of course, clergymen have a certain sort of information and ability; but they always give one an overwhelming sense of flabbiness. Once in a while there is one who seems desirous of throwing off his clerical garb and being a man among men. These, however, have an air of apology, as if they recognized the intellectual inferiority of their position; that they did not occupy the van of human thought, and were not true teachers, but mere repeaters. The mental degradation of this class of men is indeed pitiable, compelled to think they must think in chains, and tamely creep in time-worn paths. There are no mountain heights for them, only the jungles of ancient superstitions; and, compelled to dwell in these jungles, they become a sort of wild beast, despite their white neck-tie and sleek appearance. They will bark and bite and tear in pieces. No class of people are capable of