

GOLDEN THRONE.

[A ROMANCE BY SAMUEL P. PUTNAM.]

truth, law might never have been applied to it, and would not now be necessary. Moreover, how can you know that freedom is an inalienable right? Is it not, rather, a conditional right, depending upon whether used for good or evil?"

"I claim the right of freedom in marriage on the same ground with man's inalienable right to self-protection, and the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Freedom must be the means to this end. Did it ever occur to anybody what a ridiculous contradiction it is to pronounce this right upon man, and yet deny him the freedom by which it is possible to use it, and which alone gives it any value?"

Individual rights are the pivot on which a man may turn himself harmoniously and equitably with those around him; and, in the exercise of these rights, there is somewhere an exact point where the greatest possible happiness and good of society harmonizes most perfectly with the greatest possible happiness and good of the individual. In the complications of life, it is, perhaps, impossible to find this happy contact, and hence impossible to evolve a law from human conditions, which shall perfectly maintain this equipoise. The law universally chosen as approximating the nearest to this end is the one which concedes that individual rights belong to everyone, to any extent which do not violate or trespass upon the rights of others. These rights may be abused to one's self; but they still abide like the sun of heaven, which shines upon the unrighteous and the just. Were this not so, nature would impeach and confound herself; for human rights are those eternal and impartial endowments by which a man may either save or destroy himself, and yet his rights remain unchanged."

"I admit, doctor, that freedom may be safe for love, because, as you have said, true love is virtuous and constant, and needs no law; but would not freedom of passion be unsafe?"

"Indeed, does not a strong passion for the time being often mistake itself for love? What, then, but implacable law, is strong enough to deal with this most mighty but most subtle and uncertain of human forces?"

"When I speak of love, I do not mean mere appetite nor desire, but the total expression of a man's nature, wherein his reason and conscience are exerted as well as passion and affection. Love is all that a man is, which he would devote in sacrifice and in truth to another. Passion is only a part of this whole; therefore, the whole should rule the part, and not a part the whole."

"Very true; but suppose what you call love, or the total expression of a

man's nature in passional affection is not employed, but mere passion, and so does violence to reason. Would you justify freedom here as conducive to the highest morality? Yet if you admit freedom in love, would it not be arrogance to abridge or deny it to passion?"

"Unqualifiedly, that conduct is the highest which subjects itself to reason, and this would be my law; but I would have it of myself, and not of another. I have no right to make even this law of my manhood the law of another. The distinction I would make is this; that, until a man infringes upon the rights of others, he should be held subject to his own reason and authority, and not the reason or authority of others. I am willing a man should be controlled by his own conscience, but not by the conscience of another."

"After all, do you not forget, doctor, that you have just been talking about natural laws, which show that nature herself is bound? Can there be absolute freedom?"

"This is true, but we must not mistake limitations which are fixed and bounded by the natural for limitations which are themselves unnatural. There is a difference between a law which works from within toward the legitimate fulfilment of its ends, and a law which proceeds from without to interfere with and prevent those ends. Yes, there is that in freedom which preserves and expands. Freedom can educate more than repression; for law makes us responsible to law, while freedom makes us responsible to ourselves, and instead of coldness or opposition, is inspired sympathy. The finest processes of life, its noblest results, flow from and toward freedom. The noblest nations and peoples are freest. See what woman is today,—the proud companion and helper of man; she grows more strong and royal in the freedom she builds herself upon. And, only a century ago, what a slave was woman,—her education held in abhorrence, and even to know how to read denied her as a dangerous license!"

"Would you, then, dispense with human legislation?"

"I see no necessity for any; that is, I believe it should be the function of government to rigidly enact whatever financial or business compacts parties have entered into. With what else should law concern itself? It should certainly not attempt to legislate in matters of love, for love will brook no laws but its own. Love enforces itself, is its own law, and needs no other so long as it endures. When it ceases, what is any other law to it but a tyranny and an impertinence? The province of law should be that of arbiter in respect to values, estates and property claims; but, beyond this, it should not go. It cannot arbitrate in human affec-

tions, for there can be no honest traffic in love. Feelling appeals only to feeling, and will not recognize nor respect law outside of its proper domain. True marriage is as sacred as religion, and needs no enforcement above itself. If adapted to human wants, it will surely survive."

"Are you not guilty of a little prejudice, Doctor? You despise law in the regulation of social relations, yet would apply science to this effect. If love is its own law, does it need science any more than law? So far as love is concerned, is not science as cold and bloodless as law?"

"Not at all. Law presumes to control love, at least its expression, and would make it amenable to law. Science explains and instructs, and so educates feeling. Law would rule love, while science would teach love how to rule herself. I am surprised when I see men and women suffer human law to do so much where it should do nothing. If love is worth anything, if it is not a misnomer, it must be free; for love cannot be love, unless it is free. Then why should state or society interpose their authority, when the love which alone makes a marriage sacred or tolerable has departed?"

"If two human beings most deeply interested and most thoroughly acquainted with their own affairs cannot be supposed to know or decide what is best for themselves, how can any other body or organization decide for them? Some marriages are so discordant that they are simply degrading. The highest and finest feelings are daily insulted, and perhaps truth itself is sacrificed. This must not be."

"I only ask that marriage, as everything else, should be an open question,—open to more light and truth. No arbitrary fiat should be placed upon it; but, with love and science, it may be committed to the ever living manhood and womanhood of our race."

"On these grounds, then, you, of course, justify the conduct of George Eliot?"

"Justify it thoroughly. She did that which was right and proper and really conducive to human welfare. She did not revolt against marriage, but only against an unjust and cruel interference with marriage. It was a noble act, a courageous act, an heroic act; and it was a wise act,—the full, free choice of a far-seeing genius. It was not passion; it was wisdom that dictated her course. It was for marriage that she acted, not against it,—for a true and noble exalted union between a man and woman. She struck against a tyrannical institution based on superstition and bigotry with the calm persistence of her strong intellect. It was not a mistake. It was a battle that she won for human rights; and, with my deepest soul, I rever-

ence her womanly, her splendid act. She has helped to lift marriage to its true beauty. The greatest ethical teacher of her day, in her union with George Lewes she displayed her noblest morality akin with the severest lessons of her books. Now, boys, I must go back. I did not expect to say so much. You know science is my delight, and this is a deep one. I have discussed the subject chiefly from a scientific stand-point, because this side of it has, thus far in the world's history, been supremely ignored; but marriage will never be understood nor used to its highest advantage until science has unfolded what belongs to it. Holding marriage as a sacrament, there has, of course, been no place for science. It would be a heresy whose teachings would be blasphemous. Consequently, there has been no way of looking at unfortunate marriages, except in the inevitable light of self-sacrifice, abnegation, and discipline. There is another aspect of the case, more sound and hopeful because more true. At the same time, boys, don't lose sight of the fact that there is a time and place for the altruistic conceptions of duty in marriage, as have heretofore obtained. Science cannot harm these convictions. It will work in harmony with and always to the furtherance of duty. Conscience may be helped by health, so will science supply truth which is needful to goodness and power. I only insist that each one be free to adopt his own methods as best fitted to his individual needs and circumstances. This will be the best in the end, for it will teach men and women how to protect and elevate themselves through noble and worthy loves; and, as character and virtue are above law, so will this be an achievement worthy of the means. Goodnight."

"The doctor is a host in himself," said Will,—*"so learned, yet artless and modest as a child. I am glad he happened to talk on this subject tonight. I have heard him on every other topic, and have often wished he would get started on this one; for I knew, with his vast experience of life, his erudition and close observation, he would speak to some sense and purpose. He is wise, charitable, honest, and true, and I believe in what he says; but, between Lorena and me, the principle of sacrifice that he last spoke of is the one for us to accept."*

"Have you ever asked yourself the question if you had not a right to sacrifice the happiness of her husband, if, by so doing, a greater happiness for Lorena and yourself could be procured?"

"This is not a question of the mere balance of right, but of simple human nature, which is so constituted that it does seek another's happiness. This is a part of its life. Men are naturally generous as well as self-