

THE
GOLDEN BUTTERFLY.

Prologue.

I.

“**W**HAT do you think, chief?”

The speaker, who was leading by half a length, turned in his saddle and looked at his companion.

“Push on,” growled the chief, who was a man of few words.

“If you were not so intolerably conceited about the value of your words—hang it, man, you are not the Poet Laureate!—you might give your reasons why we should not camp where we are. The sun will be down in two hours; the way is long, the wind is cold, or will be soon. This pilgrim has tightened his belt to stave off the gnawing at his stomach; here is running water, here is wood, here is everything calculated to charm the poetic mind even of Captain Ladds—”

“Road!” interrupted his fellow-traveller, pointing along the track marked more by deep old wheel-ruts, grown over with grass, than by any evidences of engineering skill. “Roads lead to places; places have beds; beds are warmer than grass—no rattlesnakes in beds; miners in hotels—amusing fellows, miners.”

“If ever I go out again after buffaloes, or bear, or mountain-deer, or any other game whatever which this great continent offers, with a monosyllabic man, may I be condemned to another two months of buffalo steak without Worcester sauce, such as I have had already; may I be poisoned with bad Bourbon whisky; may I never again see the sweet shady side of Pall Mall; may I—”