CÆSAR'S COLUMN.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

[illegible]

"Hurry, men, hurry," cried Max.

Up poured the plunder, a number of the insurgents were robbing some houses three doors distant. In a few seconds they poured out, some [illegible] behind them as they ran.

"Look for the fire!" cried Max.

I expected to see the house burst into flame.

Hurry—oh, hurry, he appeared to me! But place on place I saw diminished rapidly. Finally, I saw the last of the men pass the door. As the last one passed, my eyes were riveted on that cupola invisaged it was the fire. But not a shadow!

Thirty seconds! Forty seconds! I ran out of the street, and looked down. Then great arms and hands of flame reached out and snapped and clutched at the darkness as if they would drag down ancient Knight itself, with all the wrath of man, upon the adjoining breast of the passionate conflagration. Then the roof steaded, then it seem to burst open, and vast volumes of flame and smoke and showers of sparks spouted forth. The blaze burst out, and I felt a fearful relief, but fortunately it was let down and the great bulk of our enemies

"My God! said Max, "it is Cæsar's head

I looked, and there, sure enough, upon the top of the long pole I had before noticed, was the head of the redoubtable giant. It stood out as if it had been painted in gray characters by the light of the burning house upon that background of darkness. I could see the glazed and dusty eyes, the protruding tongue, the great lower jaw hanging down in Roman fashion, and from the thick bull like neck were suspended huge gouts of dried and blackened blood

"It is the first instance of such mob, said Max, quietly, "to suspect their leaders and slay them They killed Cæsar, and then cursed after me Where they saw the star ship they were confirmed in their suspicions, they believe that I am carrying away their treasure

I could not turn my eyes from that ferocious head. It fascinated me It waved and reeled with the charging of the mob It seemed to me to be executing a hideous dance in mid air, in the midst of that terrible scene, it floated over it like a presiding demon The protruding tongue leered at the blazing house and the unspeakable horrors of that assemblage, lit up, as it was, in all its awful features, by the towering conflagration.

The crowd yelled and the fire roared The next house was blazing too, and the roof of the one nearest us was smoking The mob, perceiving that would not move, concluded that the machinery of the air ship was broken, and screamed with joy as the flames approached us

Up, up, went the flands and up hage and box, faster, and faster and faster We were not to be intimidated by fire or mobs The roof of the house next us was now blazing, and we could hear the fire, like a furnace roaring within it

The mob is finished, every parcel is safe

"Up, up, men"

"Look out! the roof is [illegible] roof, it had become insufferably hot We stood on the deck, the engineer touched the lever, and the star ship rose amid the great lord swayed for an instant, and then began to rise, like a veritable Phœnix from its nest of flame, surrounded by cataracts of sparks As the mob saw us ascend, it uttered a shriek, at first, by reason of conflagration, they groaned with dismay and disappointment The bullets flew and hissed around us, but our metallic sides laughed them to scorn Up, up, straight and swift as an arrow we rose The sleeping city lay unrolled before us, like a great map starred here and there with burning houses. Above the trees of Union Square, my glass showed me a white line, rushed by the fire, where Cæsar's Column was towering to the skies, bearing the epitaph of the world

I said to Max

"What will those millions do to-morrow?

"Starve," he said

"What will they do next week?

"Devour each other," he replied

There was silence for a time

"Will not civil government rise again out of the ashes?"

"Not for a long time," he replied "Ignorance, passion, suspicion, brutality, criminality, will be the lions in the path Men who have such dreadful memories of the past can never be forced back into it. And who is to employ them? After about three fourths of the human family have died of hunger, or been killed, the remainder, constituting, by the law of the survival of the fittest, the most powerful and brutal, will find it necessary, for self defence against each other, to form squads or gangs. The greatest fighter in each of these will become chief, as among all savages. Then the history of the world will be slowly repeated A bold ruffian will conquer a number of the adjacent squads, and become a king Gradually, and in its rudest forms, later will begin again, at first principally by slaves. Men will exchange liberty for protection. After a century or two a kind of commerce may arise Then will follow other centuries of wars, between provinces or nations Anew civilization will spring up. Culture will lift its head A great power, like Rome in the old world, may arise Some vast superstition may take possession of the world, and Alfred, Victoria and Washington may be worshipped as Saturn, Juno and Hercules were in the past, with perhaps dreadful and bloody rights like those of Carthaginians and ancient Mexicans And so, step by step, mankind will re-enact the great human drama, which begins always with a tragedy, runs through a comedy, and terminates in a catastrophe

The city was disappearing we were over the ocean the cool salt breeze was refreshing We both inhaled it

"Think" I said, "what is going on yonder"

Max shuddered There was a sullen light in his eyes. He looked at his father, who was on his knees praying

"I will desire [illegible] to find out exactly from [illegible] what has happened. He was justified in [illegible]

Gabriel he said after a pause, if the outbreak had been premeditated we would it certainly have [illegible] Cæsar's question [illegible] Fielding [illegible] in humanity we [illegible] it [illegible] turned [illegible] inevitable It must be [illegible] of [illegible] the blackest [illegible] It [illegible] the legend of Cæsar [illegible] correct by blood [illegible] [illegible] of events like that which [illegible] now happening

"It may be, Max I replied and we were silent

From the sea there testimony to the ruin of man The light houses no longer held up their fingers of flame to warn the mariner from the treacherous rocks. No air ship, brilliant with many lights shining like a meteor in the night, flew with passengers, streamed just as with fierce swiftness, splitting the astonished and complaining air. Here and there a sailing vessel, or a steamer, toiled laboriously along, with frightened people in their journeys end, starving creatures would swarm up their sides to kill and devour

How still and peaceful was the night the great, solemn, patient night! How sweet and pure the air How delightful the silence to ears that had rung so long with the clamors of that infuriated mob How pleasant the darkness to eyeballs seared so long by fire and flame and sights of murder Estella and Christina came and sat down near us They faces showed the torture they had endured, not so much from fear as from the shock and agony with which goodness contemplates terrible and triumphant evil.

I looked into the fathomless depths of the stars above us, at that endless succession of shining worlds, at that illimitable expanse of silence And I thought of those vast gaps and lapses of mankind time, when all these stars had been unrolled and unshelled themselves before the attentive eyes of God, and it had not yet entered into his heart to create that swarming, writhing, crawling, contentious mass we call humanity. And I said to myself, "Why should a God condescend to such a work as man!"

And yet, again, I felt that one grateful heart, that darted out the living line of its love and adoration from this dark and perturbed earth, up to the shining throne of the Great Intelligence, must be of more moment and esteem in the universe than millions of tons of mountains—yes, than a wilderness of stars For matter is but the substance with which God works, while thought, love, conscience and consciousness are parts of God himself We think, therefore we are divine we pray, therefore we are immortal

"Yet of God" The awful, the inexpressible, the incomprehensible God His terrible hand whirls, with unresting power, yonder innumerable coogs, atom of suns in their mighty orbits, and yet stoops, with tender touch, to build up the petals of the meanest and paint with rainbows those the moily wings of the butterfly

I could have wept over man; but I remembered that God there, beyond the stars

CHAPTER XXXIX

The next day we were flying over the ocean The fractious and changeable ocean we traversed, with those ever-changing, tedious hues and colors, as light and foam and billows mingled Far as the eye could reach, they seemed to be climbing over each other forever, like the endless competitors in a great race, or like the Alps Above us was the panorama of the clouds so often the harbingers of terror, for even in their gentlest forms they foretell the tempest, which is ever gathering the mists around it like a garment, and, how even slow paced, is still advancing

A whale spouted. Happy nature! How cunningly were the wet, sliding waves accommodated to that smooth skin and those nerves which rioted in the play of the twinkling waters A school of dolphins leaped and gambolled, showing their curved backs to the sun in sudden glimpses, a vast family, merry, social, jocund, abandoned to happiness. The gulls flew without an end of ship's as indeed a large bird; and I thought of the poet's lines wherein he describes—

"The gray gull, balanced on its bow like wings,
Between two black waves, sailing where it dips
Dives"

And here were more kindly adjustments. How the birds took advantage of the wind and made it lift them or sink them, or propel them forward, tacking, with infinite skill, right in the eye of the gale, like a sailing vessel. It was not for it was delight, rapture, the very glory and ecstasy of living. Everywhere the benevolence of God was manifest light, sound, air, sea, clouds, beast, fish and bird; we were in the midst of all, we rejoiced in all

And then my thoughts reverted to the great city, to that congregation of houses, to those streets swarming with murderers, to that hungry, moaning multitude

Why did they perish? Why did God let such poor alike mock me! If they had not done so, this dreadful cup might have been averted from their lips But it would seem as if faith and civilize sun were incompatible Christ was slain, perishing in a lawless world; and the few who were shoes murdered him What dark perversity was it in the blood of the race that made it wrap itself in misery, like a garment, while all nature was happy!

That told me that we had had a narrow escape Of the three messengers we had sent forth to General Quincy, but one reached him, the others had been slain on the streets And when that solitary man fought his way through to the armory he found the Musketeers of the Rhine in the act of preparations for a fight that night to the mountain region Had we delayed one day, or had all three of our messengers been killed in the massacre we must all have perished in the midst of the furious tumult of the burning Golden City. We met Mr Philips there, in safety, and had the pleasure of his company home

We reached our home in safety late in the night, and I was soon in my bed. As soon as I was alone, my tears began to flow I felt kicks of which only I knew the cause, and which I felt I could not mention to Max I thought of the dreadful scenes I had witnessed, of the terrible, the unspeakable, the inexplicable horrors of the day, of the unknown, the unknowable, the mysterious, of the blackness of darkness, of the legend of Cæsar's Column, of the correspondence between the most terrible of events like that which we now happening

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