CÆSAR'S COLUMN.

By Ignatius Donnelly.

CHAPTER XXXV—*Continued.*

"Dunif, he calm! This is not as bad as a sentence of death, or even a perpetuity for honest and innocent man. And, remember, my dear Count, how you have enjoyed your self all these years, while my poor father has been toiling in prison in a dreadful way. Think of the roast beef you have eaten and the wine you have consumed! And, moreover, the death you are about to die, my dear Count, was once fashionable and popular in the world, and many a good and holy man went up to heaven from just such a death-bed as you shall have—a death bed of fire and ashes.

"Audase, my good Count, how willingly those honest men, whom you hired, with your damnable money, to destroy my father,—see how willingly they work to prepare your funeral pile! What a supple and pliant thing, O Count, is human baseness. It has but one defect—it may be turned upon ourselves! And then, O my dear Count, it shocks us and hurts our feelings. But say your prayers, Count, say your prayers. Call upon God, for He is the only one likely to listen to you now.

"'Here,' I said to the judge, 'put a man on to the pile.'

"The miserable wretch, trembling and hoping to save his own life by his superlative zeal, got down upon his knees, and lighted a match, and puffed and blew to make the fire catch. At last it started briskly, and in a few minutes the Count was screaming in the centre of a roaring furnace

"I gave a preconcerted signal to my men. In the twinkling of an eye each of the prisoners was manacled hand and foot, shrieking and roaring for mercy.

"'It was a splendid joke, gentlemen,' I said to them, 'that you played on my father. To send that good man to prison, and to go home with the price of his honor and his liberty jingling in your pockets. It was a capital joke; and you will now feel the finest point of the witticism. In with them!'

'And high above the walls of fire they were thrown, and the briber and the bribed—the villain and his instruments—all perished howling together.'

I listened, awestruck, to the terrible story. There was a light in Max's eyes which showed that long brooding over the wrongs of his father and the sight of his executed and wretched foreshadowed some like madness in his brain, until he was, as I had feared, a monomaniac, with but one idea—*revenge*.

"'Max dear Max,' I said, "for Heaven's sake never let Christina or your mother hear that dreadful story. It was a madman's act! Never think of it again. You have wiped out the crime in blood, there let it end. And leave these awful scenes, or you will become a maniac.'

He did not answer me for a time, but looked down thoughtfully; and then he glanced at me, furtively, and said:

"'Is not revenge right? Is it not simply justice?'

"'Perhaps so, in some sense,' I replied; 'and if you had killed those base wretches with your own hand the world could not have much blamed you. Remember, however, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.' But to send them out of life by such dreadful tortures! It is too terrible.'

"'But death,' he said, 'is nothing; it is the mere end of life—perhaps of consciousness; and that is no atonement for years of suffering, every day of which was full of more agony than death itself can wring from the human heart.'

"'I will not argue with you, Max,' I replied, 'for you are wrong, and I love you; but do you not see, when a heart, the kindest in the world, could conceive and execute such a terrible revenge, that the condition of the mind is abnormal? But let us change the gloomy subject. The dreadful time has put 'tricks of desperation' in your brain. And it is not the least of the crimes of the Oligarchy that it could thus pervert honest and gentle natures, and turn them into savages. And that is what it has done to millions. It has fought against goodness, and developed wickedness."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CÆSAR PLOTS HIS MONUMENT.

"'What other news have you?' I asked

"'The strangest you ever heard,' replied Max.

"'What is it?'

"'Cæsar,' said Max, "has fallen upon a scheme of the most frenzied and extraordinary kind.'

"'Are the members of the Executive Committee all going crazy together?' I asked.

"'Surely,' replied Max, "the terrible events we are passing through would be our excuse if we did. But you shall hear. After I had avenged my father I proceeded to find Cæsar. I heard from members of the Brotherhood, whom I met on the streets, that he was at Prince Caban's palace. I hurried there, as it was necessary I should confer with him on some matters. A crowd had rendezvoused around the building, which had become in some sort a headquarters; and, in fact, Cæsar had confiscated it to his own uses, and intends to keep it as his home hereafter. I found him in the council chamber. You never saw such a sight. He was so black with dust and blood that he looked like a negro. He was hatless, and his mat of hair rose like a wild beast's mane. He had been drinking; his eyes were wild as I rolling; the great sword he held in his right hand was caked with blood to the hilt. He was in a fearful state of excitement, and roared when he spoke. A king dwell come fresh out of hell could scarcely have looked more terrible. Behind him in one corner, crouching and cringing together, were a bevy of young and handsome women. Suddenly he spied me. 'Hurrah! There is Max! Hurrah! Hurrah! This is my palace. I am a king! Look-a-there, he said, with a roll and a leer, pointing over his shoulder at the shrinking and terrified women; 'aint they beauties—big—all mine—every one of 'em.'

"'Here one of his principal officers came up, and the following dialogue occurred:

"'I came, General, to ask you what we are to do with the dead.'

"'Kill em,' roared Cæsar. 'kill 'em, I—n 'em.'

"'But, General, they are dead already,' replied the officer, who was steady fellow and perfectly sober.

"'Well, what's the matter with 'em, then?' replied Cæsar 'Come, come, Bill, if they're dead, that's the end of them. Take a drink,' and he turned, unsteadily, toward the council table, on which stood several bottles and demijohns.

"'But some of us have talked it over,' said the officer. 'A number of the streets are impassable already with the dead. There must be a quarter of a million of soldiers and citizens lying about, and the number is being added to every minute. The weather is warm, and they will soon breed a pestilence that will revenge them of their slayers. Those killed by the poison are beginning to smell already. We couldn't take any action without your authority, and so I came to ask you for your orders.'

"'Burn 'em up,' said Cæsar.

"'We can't,' said the man; 'we would have to burn up the city to destroy them in that way; there are too many of them; and it would be an immense task to bury them.'

"'Heap 'em all up in one big pile,' said Cæsar.

"'That wouldn't do—the smell they would make in decaying would be unbearable, to say nothing of the sickness they would create.'

"Cæsar was standing unsteadily, looking at us with lack-luster eyes. Suddenly an idea seemed to dawn in his monstrous head—an idea as monstrous and uncouth as the head itself. His eyes lighted up.

"'I have it!' he shouted. 'By G—d, I have it! Make a pyramid of them, and pour cement over them, and let them stand forever as a monument of this day's glorious work! Hoorrah!'

"'That's a pretty good idea,' said the officer, and the others present, courtier-like, for King Cæsar already has his courtiers—applauded the idea vociferously.

"'We'll have a monument that shall last while the earth stands,' cried Cæsar. 'And, hold on, Bill,' he continued, 'you shall build it;—and—I say—we won't make a pyramid of it—it shall be a column!—*Cæsar's Column*—by G—d. It shall reach to the skies.' And if there aren't enough dead to build it of, why, we'll kill some more; we've got plenty to kill. Old Thingumbob, who used to live here—in my palace—said he would kill ten million of us to-day. But he didn't. Not much! Max's friend—that d——d long legged fellow from Africa—he dished him, for he told Quincy all about it. And now I've got old Thingumbob's best girl in the corner yonder. Oh, it's jolly. But build the column, Bill—build it high and strong. I remember—he—how they used to build houses on the Saskatchewan, when I was grubbing for potatoes there. They had a board frame the length of a wall and three or four feet high. They would throw in stones, bowlders, pebbles, dirt, anything, and, when it was full, they would pour cement over it all; and when it hardened—he—which it did in a few minutes, they lifted up the frame and made another course. I say, Bill, that's the way you must build Cæsar's column. And get Charley Carpenter to help you; he's an engineer. And, hold on, Bill, put a lot of dynamite—Jim has just told me they had found tons of it—put a lot of dynamite—he—in the middle of it, and if they try to tear down my monument, it will blow them to the d——l! And, I say, Max, that long-legged, preaching son of thunder—that friend of yours—he must write an inscription for it. Do you hear? He's the man to do it. Something fine. By G—d, we will build a monument that will beat the pyramids of all the other Cæsars. Cæsar's Column! Hoorah!'

"And the great brute fairly jumped with delight over his extraordinary conception.

"Bill hurried out. They have sixty thousand prisoners—men who had not been among the condemned—but merchants, professional men, etc. They were debating, when I came up, whether they would kill them, but I suggested that they be set to work on the construction of Cæsar's Column, and if they worked well, that their lives be spared. This was agreed to. They are now building the monument on Union Square. Thousands of wagons are at work bringing in the dead. Other wagons are hauling cement, sand, etc. Bill and his friend Carpenter are at work. They have constructed great boxes, about forty feet from front to rear, about four feet high and fifty feet long. The dead are to be laid in rows—the feet of the one row of men near the centre of the monument, and the feet of the next row touching the heads of the first, and so on. In the middle of the column there is to be a cavity, about five feet square, running from the top to the bottom of the monument, in which the dynamite is to be placed while wires will lead out from it among the bodies so arranged with full sometime charges, that any attempt to destroy the monument or remove the bodies will inevitably result in a terrible explosion. But we will go after dinner and look at the work. He said: 'For they are to labor night and day until it is finished. The members of the Brotherhood have entered with great zeal into the idea of such a monument, as a symbol and memorial of their victory and triumph

"'I remember,' said I, reading somewhere that some centuries ago an army of white men conquered one of the Barbary states. They were defeated by the natives and were every one slain. The Moors took their bodies and piled them up in a great monument, and there the white bones and grinning skulls remain to this day, a pyramid of skeletons, a ghastly warning to others who might think to make a like attempt at invasion of the country. Cæsar must have read of that terrible trophy of victory

"'Perhaps so,' said Max; 'but the idea may have been original with him, for there is no telling what such a monstrous brain as his, fired by whisky and battle, might or might not produce.'

At dinner poor Mr Phillips was looking somewhat better. He had a great many questions to ask his son about the insurrection

"'Arthur,' he said, 'if the bad man and his accomplices, who so cruelly used me, should be made prisoners, I beg you, as a favor to me, not to punish them. Leave them to God and their own consciences!'

"'I shall,' said Max, quietly.

Mrs. Phillips heartily approved of this sentiment. I looked down at my plate, but before my eyes there came a dreadful picture of that fortress of flame, with the chained man in the midst and high above it I could see, swung through the air by powerful arms, manacled figures, who descended, shrieking, into the vortex of fire.

After many injunctions to his guards, to look well after the house, Max and I, well armed and wearing our red crosses, and accompanied by two of our most trusted men, sallied forth through the back gate.

What a scene! Chaos had come. There were no cars or carriages. Thieves and murderers were around us; scenes of rapine and death on every hand. We moved together in a body; our magazine rifles ready for instant use.

Our red crosses protected us from the members of the Brotherhood; and the thieves gave our guns a wide berth. At a street crossing we encountered a wagon-load of dead bodies; they were being hauled to the monument. The driver, one of the Brotherhood, recognized Max, and invited us to seats beside him. Familiarity makes death as sweet as life. We accepted his offer—one of our men sitting on the tail board of the wagon; and in this gory chariot we rode slowly through Broadway, deserted now by everything but crime. The shops had all been broken open dead bodies lay here and there; and occasionally a burned block lifted its black arms appealingly to heaven. As we drew near to Union Square, a wonderful sight—such as the world had never before beheld—expanded before us. Great blazing bonfires lighted the work; hundreds of thousands had gathered to behold the ghastly structure, the plan of which had already spread everywhere. These men nearly all belonged to the Brotherhood, or were members of the lower orders, who felt that they had nothing to fear from the Brotherhood. They were many, and [illegible] being them, and not a few th[illegible] drawn by curiosity, for a while Fear [illegible] opportunities and their instincts. [illegible] the great outer circle of dark and [illegible] ate and exultant faces, there was another [illegible] assemblage of a different appearance. These were the prisoners at work up the monument. Many of them were gray-haired; some turned, not a few were in rags, or half naked, their clothes having been literally torn from their backs. They were dejected, and yet moved with alacrity, in fear of the whip or clubs in the hands of their masters, who passed among them filling the air with oaths. Max pointed out to me prominent merchants, lawyers and clergymen. They were all dazed, looking like men after a terrific earthquake, who had lost confidence in the stability of everything. It was Anarchy personified—the man of intellect were doing the work, the men of muscle were giving the orders. The underrail had come on top. It reminded me of Scott's story of the country where the men were servants to the horses.

The wagons rolled up, half a dozen at a time, and dumped their dreadful burdens on the stones, with no more respect or ceremony than if they had been cord wood. Then the poor trembling prisoners seized them by the head and feet, and carried them to other prisoners, who stood inside the boxes, and who arranged them like double lines from a central point:—it was the many-rayed sun of death that had set upon civilization. Then, when the box was full and closely packed, they poured the liquid cement, which had been mixed close at hand, over them. It hardened at once, and the dead were entombed forever. Then the box was lifted and the work of sepulture went on

While I stood watching the scene I heard a thrilling, ear-piercing shriek—a dreadful cry! A young man, who was helping to carry a corpse, let go his hold and fell down on the pavement. I went over to him. He was writhing and moaning. He had observed something familiar about the form he was bearing—it was the body of a woman. He had peered through the dishevelled hair at the poor, agonized, blood-stained features, and recognized—*his wife!*

One of the guards raised his whip to strike him, and shouted:

"'Here! Get up! None of this humbugging!'

I caught the ruffian's arm. The poor wretch was embracing the dead body, and

"SHOULD CIVILIZATION EVER REVIVE ON EARTH, LET THE HUMAN RACE COME HITHER AND LOOK UPON THIS TOWERING SHAFT, AND LEARN TO RESTRAIN SELFISHNESS AND LIVE FRIGHTFUL."

were bloody from wounds upon their heads or bodies; they were all pale and moaning pitiful expressions of love and tenderness that were so out of place and hear him more. The ruffian threatened me. But the mob was moved to mercy, and took my part; and even permitted the poor creature to carry off his dead in his arms, sunk into the outer darkness. God only knows where he could live borne it.

I grew sick of heart. The whole scene was awful.

I advanced toward the column. It was already several feet high, and ladders were being made, up which the dead might be borne. Coffee and bread and meat were served out to the workers.

I noticed a sneaking, ruffianly fellow, going about among the prisoners, peering into every face. Not far from me a ruggedhatless, gray-haired man, of over seventy, was helping another, equally old, to bear a heavy body to the ladders. The ruffian looked first into the face of the man at the feet of the corpse; then he came to the man at the head. He uttered an exclamation of delight.

"'Ha! you old scoundrel!' he cried, drawing his pistol. "'So I've found you. You're the man thy turned my sick wife out of your house, because she could not pay the rent. I've got you now.

The old man fell on his knees, and held up his hands and begged for mercy.

I heard an explosion—a red spot suddenly appeared on his forehead, and he fell forward, over the corpse he had been carrying—dead

"'Come' more lively!' cried one of guards, snapping his whip: "'carry them both to the workmen.'

I grew dizzy. Maximilian came up

"'How pale you are,' he said.

"'Take me away!' I exclaimed, "'or I shall faint.'

We rode back in another chariot of revolution—a death cart.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SECOND DAY.

It was a dreadful night. Crowds of farmers from the surrounding counties kept pouring into the city. They were no longer the honest yeomanry who had filled, in the old time, the armies of Washington, and Jackson, and Grant, and Sherman, with brave and patriotic settlers but their brutalized descendants—hence serfs—cruel and bloodthirsty peasants. Everyman who owned anything was their enemy and their victim. They invaded the houses of friend and foe alike and murdered men, women and children in Plunder! plunder! They had no other thought

One of our men came to me at midnight, and said:

"'Do you hear those shrieks?'

"'Yes, I replied

"'They are murdering the family next door.'

These were pleasant, kindly people, who had never harmed any one. But this malestrom swallows good and bad alike.

Another came running to me, and cried:

"'They are attacking the house!'

"'Who is?' I asked.

"'At the front door.'

'Throw over a hand grenade,' I said

There was a loud crash, and a scurrying of flying feet. The cowardly miscreants had fled. They were murderers, not warriors.

All night long the awful Bedlam raged The dark streets swarmed. Three times we had to have recourse to the hand-grenades. Fires sprung up all over the city, licking the darkness with their hideous tongues of flame, and revealing by their crimson glare the awful sights of that unparalleled time. The dread came upon me: What if some wretch should fire a house in our block? How should we choose between the conflagration and those terrible streets? Would it not be better to be ashes and cinders, than to fall into the hands of that demoniacal mob?

No one slept. Max sat apart and thought. Was he considering—too late—whether it was right to have helped produce this terrible catastrophe? Early in the morning, accompanied by three of his men, he went out.

We ate breakfast in silence. It seemed to me we had no right to eat in the midst of so much death and destruction.

There was an alarm, and the firing of guns above us. Some miscreants had tried to reach the roof of our house from the adjoining buildings. We rushed up. A lively fusilade followed. Our magazine rifles and hand-grenades were too much for them; some fell dead and the rest beat a hasty retreat. They were peasants, searching for plunder.

After awhile there came a loud rapping at the front door. I leaned over the parapet and asked who was there. A rough-looking man replied:

"'I have a letter for you.'

Fearing some trick, to break into the house, I lowered a long cord and told him to tie the letter to it. He did so. I pulled up a large sheet of dirty wrapping paper. There was some lines scrawled upon it, in lead-pencil, in the large hand of a school boy—almost undecipherable. With some study I made out these words:

MISTER GABRIEL, MAX'S FRIEND:—Cæsar wants that thing to put in front of the column.

BILL

It took me a few minutes to understand it. At last I realized that Cæsar's officer—Bill—had sent for the inscription for the monument, about which Cæsar had spoken to Max. I called down to the messenger to wait, and that I would give it to him.

I sat down, and, after some thought, wrote, on the back of the wrapping paper, these words:

THIS GREAT MONUMENT
IS
ERECTED BY
CÆSAR LOMELLINI,
COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE
BROTHERHOOD OF DESTRUCTION,
IN
COMMEMORATION OF
THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF
MODERN CIVILIZATION.

"It is composed of the bodies of a quarter of a million of human beings, who were once the rulers, or the instruments of the rulers, of this mighty, but, alas! this ruined city.

"They were dominated by leaders who were altogether evil.

"They corrupted the courts, the juries, the newspapers, the legislatures, the congresses, the ballot-boxes and the hearts and souls of the people.

"They formed gigantic combinations to plunder the poor; to make the miserable more miserable; to take from those who had least and give it to those who had most.

"They used the machinery of free government to effect oppression; they made liberty a mockery, and its traditions a jest; they drove justice from the land and installed cruelty, ignorance, despair and vice in its place

"Then hearts were harder than the nether mill stone; they degraded humanity and outraged God.

"At length indignation stirred in the holy courts of heaven; and overburdened human nature rose in universal revolt on earth

"By the very instruments which their own wickedness had created they perished; and here they lie, sepulchered in stone, and heaped around explosives as destructive as their own lives. We execrate their vices, while we weep for their misfortunes. They were the culmination of centuries of misgovernment; and they paid an awful penalty for the sins of generations of short-sighted and selfish ancestors, as well as for their own cruelty and wickedness.