# CÆSAR'S COLUMN.

BY IGNATIUS DONNELLY.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.—The scene of the story is laid in the City of New York in the year 1988. The hero, Gabriel Weltstein, a citizen of the African State of Uganda, of Swiss origin, comes to New York on business. There, by a curious series of adventures, he becomes aware of the existence of a widespread secret organization, having its ramifications in all parts of the world, and known as the Brotherhood of Destruction, having for its object universal revolution and the overthrow of an utterly corrupt and demoralized plutocracy. Having rendered one of the chiefs of the Brotherhood, a young man named Maximilian Peton, an important service, Gabriel becomes intimate with him, and gains the confidence of the leaders in the movement. He learns that a young lady named Estella Washington, with whom he has fallen in love at first sight, is an inmate of the household of Prince Cabano, a Hebrew magnate of enormous wealth, one of the leaders of the clique of rich men who are the real government of the country. Prince Cabano had purchased Estella from a wicked and unscrupulous aunt, intending to make her his mistress. Gabriel Weltstein resolves to save her, and, enlisting the aid of Maximilian, gains admittance to the mansion of Prince Cabano, through the connivance of Rudolph, a member of Cabano's household, who belongs to the Brotherhood. Estella is informed of her danger, and a scheme devised for her rescue. A meeting of the government is held at Prince Cabano's palace, Gabriel Weltstein being concealed in a conservatory so that he can see and hear all that goes forward. A spy named Stephen Andrews, a workingman who has been hired by Prince Cabano, is introduced, who betrays to the Council what he has learned of the plans of the Brotherhood. General Quincy, commander of the forces, demands increased pay for the soldiers. The government comply, and after his withdrawal discuss the coming outbreak, and lay plans for a wholesale massacre of the people. Gabriel Weltstein, who has heard all, rushes forward and pleads with them to abandon their purpose. The Prince determines on having him killed, and he is detained in Rudolph's custody until an assassin arrives. He and Estella escape by Rudolph's connivance. He attends a secret conclave of the Brotherhood to report as to the plans of the government. The spy Stephen Andrews is present and on being identified by Gabriel is put to death. General Quincy is introduced into the Brotherhood and is informed by Gabriel that the government after using him and his men to suppress the insurrection, intend to have him and other officers executed. The General makes terms with the Brotherhood and agrees to bring the *Dragons*, or air-ships under his command to their aid when the revolt breaks out. Gabriel attends a fashionable church.

## CHAPTER XXI.—(*Continued.*)

HERE the young lady with the song book drew up closer to me, and looked up into my eyes with a gaze which no son of Adam could misunderstand. I thought of Estella, like a true knight and turned my face to the preacher. While his doctrines were, to me, utterly heartless and abominable, there was about him such an ecstasy of voluptuousness, associated with considerable intellectual force and passionate oratory, that I was quite interested in him as a psychological study. I could not help but think by what slow stages, through many generations, a people called themselves Christians—and have been brought to this curious commingling of intellectuality and bestiality; and all upon the basis of indifference to the sorrows and sufferings of their fellow creatures.

"On with the dance!" shouted the preacher, "though we dance above the graves. Let the very calamities of the world accentuate our pleasures, even as the warm and sheltered fireside seems more delightful when we hear without the roar of the tempest. The ancient Egyptians brought into their banquets the mummied bodies of the dead, to remind them of mortality. It was a foolish custom. Men are made to feast and made to die; and the one is as natural as the other.

Let us, on the other hand, when we rejoice together, throw open our windows, that we may behold the swarming, starving multitudes who stream past our doors. Their pinched and ashy faces and hungry eyes, properly considered, will add a flavor to our viands. We will rejoice to think that if, in this ill-governed universe, all cannot be blest, we at least rise above the universal wretchedness and are reserved for happiness.

"Rejoice, therefore, my children, in your wealth, in your health, in your strength, in your bodies, and in your loves. Ye are the flower and perfection of mankind. Let no pleasure be shorten, by one instant, your pleasures. Death is the end of all things—of consciousness; of sensation; of happiness. Immortality is the dream of dotards. When ye can no longer enjoy, make ready for the grave. To the end of Love is death.

"And what is Love? Love is the drawing together of two beings, in that nature-enforced affinity and commingling, which out of the very impact and identity of two spirals, life, triumphant life, springs into the universe.

"What a powerful impulse is this Love? It is nature-wide. The rushing together of the chemical elements; the attraction of suns and planets—all are Love. See how even the plant casts its pollen abroad on the winds, that it may somewhere reach and rest upon the loving bosom of a sister flower; and there, amid perfume and sweetness, at the touch of zephyrs, the great mystery of life is re-enacted. The plant is without intellect, but it is sensible to Love.

"And who shall doubt, when he contemplates the complicated mechanism by which, everywhere, this God Nature—blind as to pain and sin and death, but tender and solicitous as to birth and life—makes Love possible, imperative, soulful, overwhelming, that the proposed end and aim of life is Love. And how pitiful and barren seems to us the lives of the superstitious and ascetic hermits of the ancient world, who fled to desert places, to escape from Love, and believed that they were overcoming the foul fiend by prayers and fastings and scourgings. But outraged Nature, mighty amid the ruins of their blasted hearts, resurrected herself, and visited them even in dreams; and the white arms and loving lips of woman overwhelmed them with hot and passionate caresses, in visions against which they strove in vain.

"Oh, my brethren every nerve, fiber, muscle and petty artery of the body, participates in Love. Love is the conqueror of death, because Love alone perpetuates life. Love is life! Love is religion. Love is universal. Love is God!"

And with this climax he sat down amid great applause as in a theater.

I need scarcely say to you, my dear Henrich, that I was absolutely shocked by this sermon. Knowing, as you do, the kind and pure and gentle doctrines taught in the little church in our mountain home, where love means charity for man and worship of God you may imagine how my blood boiled at this cruel, carnal and heartless harangue. The glowing and picturesque words which he poured out were simply a carpet of flowers spread over crawling serpents.

The audience of course were familiar with these doctrines. The preacher owed his success, indeed, to the fact that he had courageously avowed the sentiments which had dwelt in the breasts of the people and had been enacted in their lives for generations. The congregation had listened with rapt attention to this eloquent echo of their own hearts; this justification of their Nature-worship; this re-birth of Paganism. The women nestled closer to the men at the tender passages; and I noticed many a blushing interchange of glances, between bold, bright eyes, which told too well that the great preacher's adjurations were not thrown away upon unwilling listeners.

Another song was sung; and then there was a rustle of silks and satins. The audience were about to withdraw. The preacher sat upon his sofa, on the platform, mopping his broad forehead with his handkerchief, for he had spoken with great energy. I could restrain myself no longer. I rose and said in a loud voice, which at once arrested the movement of the congregation.

"GABRIEL AT THE FASHIONABLE CHURCH"

Reverend sir, would you permit a stranger to make a few comments on your sermon?"

"Certainly," he replied, very courteously; "we welcome discussion. Will you step to the platform?"

"No," I replied; "with your permission I shall speak from where I stand.

"I can only say to you that I am inexpressibly shocked and grieved by your discourse.

"Are you blind? Can you not see that Christianity was intended by God to be something better and nobler, superimposed, as an after-birth of time, on the brutality of the elder world? Does not the great doctrine of Evolution, in which you profess, preach this gospel? If man rose from a brute form, then advanced to human and savage life, yet a robber and a murderer; then reached civility and culture, and philanthropy: can you not see that the finger-board of God points forward, unerringly, along the whole track of the race; and that it is still pointing forward to stages, in the future, when man shall approximate the angels? But this is not your doctrine. Your creed does not lead forward; it leads backward, to the troglodyte in his cavern, splitting the leg-bones of his victim to extract the marrow for his cannibalistic feast. *He would have enjoyed your sermon!*" (Great excitement in the congregation.)

"And your gospel of Love. What is it but beastliness? Like the old Greeks and Romans, and all undeveloped antiquity, you deify the lowest trait of the animal. Lechery organizes; you exult an animal incident of life into the end of life. You drive out of the lofty temples of the soul the noble and pure aspirations, the great charities, the divine thoughts, which should float there forever on the pinions of angels; and you cover the floor of the temple with crawling creatures, toads, lizards, vipers—growling mattresses, base appetites, leprous sensualities, that befoul the walls of the house with their snail like markings, and climb, and climb; until they look out of the very windows of the soul, with such repellent and brutish eyes, that real love withers and dries at the sight, and then like a blasted flower.

"O shallow teacher of the blind, do you not see that Christianity was a new force, Heaven-sent, to overcome that very cruelty and heartlessness of Nature which you so much commend? Nature's offspring was indeed the savage, merciless as the creed you preach. Then came God, who breathed a *soul* into the nostrils of the savage. Then came One after Him who said the essence of all religion was man a love for his fellow man and for the God that is over all, that the highest worship of the Father was to heal the sick, and feed the hungry, and comfort the despised and rejected, and lift up the fallen. And love?—that was true love, made up in equal parts of adoration and of pity! Not the thing you call love, which makes these faces flush with passion and these eyes burn with lust!

I had gotten thus far, and was proceeding swingingly, very much to my own satisfaction, when an old woman who stood near me, and who was dressed like a girl of twenty, with false rubber shoulders and neck and cheeks, to hide the ravages of time, hurled a huge hymn-book, the size of a Bible, at me. Age had not impaired the venerable woman's accuracy of aim, nor withered the strength of her good right arm; and the volume of deluted piety encountered me, with great force, just below my right ear, and sent me tottering over against Max. As I rose, nothing discouraged, to renew my discourse, I found the air full of hymn books, cushions umbrellas, overshoes, and every other missile, they could lay their hands on; and then I perceived that the whole congregation, men, women, children, preacher, clerks and ushers, were all advancing upon me with evil intent. I would fain have stayed to have argued the matter out with them, for I was full of a great many fine points, which I had not yet had time to present, but Max, who never had any interest in theological discussions, and abhorred a battle with Amazons, seized me by the arm and literally dragged me out of the church. I continued, however, to shout back my anathemas of the preacher, and that worthy answered me with floods of abuse; and the women screamed, and the men howled and swore; and altogether it was a very pretty assemblage that poured forth upon the side walk.

"Come along," said Max; "you will be arrested, and that will spoil everything."

He hurried me into a carriage and we drove off. Although still full of the debate, I could not help but laugh when I looked back at the multitude in front of the church. Every one was wildly ejaculating, except some of the sisters, who were kissing the hands and face of the preacher—dear, good man—to console him for the hateful insults I had heaped upon him! They reminded me of a swarm of hornets whose paper domicile had been rudely kicked by the foot of some wandering country boy.

"Well, well," said Max, "you are a strange character! Your impulses will some time cost you your life. If I did not think so much of you as I do, I should tell you you were a great fool. Why couldn't you keep quiet? You surely didn't hope to convert that congregation, any more than you could have converted the Council of the Plutocracy."

"But, my dear fellow," I replied, "it was a great comfort to me to be able to tell that old rascal just what I thought of him. And you can't tell—it may do some good."

"No, no," said Max, "the only preacher that will ever convert that congregation is Cæsar Lomellini. Cæsar is a bigger brute than they are—which is saying a good deal. The difference is, they are brutes who are in possession of the good things of this world; and Cæsar is a brute who wants to get into possession of them. And there is another difference: they are polished and cultured brutes, and Cæsar is the brute natural,—the unaccommodated man that Lear spoke of."

## CHAPTER XXII.

ESTELLA AND I.

I need not say to you, my dear Heinrich, how greatly I love Estella. It is not alone for her beauty, although that is as perfect and as graceful as the dream of some Greek artist here in immortal marble. That alone would have checked my admiration. But there is that profoundest respect for woman in me, that said my veneration. Her frame is the covering of a bright and pure soul, without blemish. It does her to be otherwise than goodness, character intrench