# CÆSAR'S COLUMN.

By IGNATIUS DONNELLY

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.—The scene of the story is laid in 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 Petion, 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 Prince Cabano attempts the ruin of Estella Washington, who barricades herself in her room, being secretly aided by Rudolph. She is armed with a poisoned knife which she determines to use in the last extremity Acting under the orders of the Prince, one of his servants breaks into her room when Estella stabs him and he expires in horrible agony. 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 bribed by Prince Cabano, is introduced, who betrays to the Council what he has learned of the plans of the Brotherhood.

## CHAPTER XIV.—(*Continued*).

"Yes," replied the man spoken to, very coolly. "There is, however, no truth," he added, "in the latter part of the story; for I have had detectives shadow young Phillips ever since he returned to the city, and they report to me that he is a shallow, dissipated, drunken, worthless fellow, who spends his time about saloons and running after actresses and singers; and that it will not be long until he will have neither health nor fortune left."

I need not say that I was an intent listener to everything, and especially to the latter part of the spy's story. I pieced it out with what Maximilian had told me, and felt certain that Maximilian Petion and Arthur Phillips were one and the same person I could now understand why it was that a gentleman so intelligent, frank and kindly by nature could have engaged in so desperate and bloody a conspiracy. Nor could I, with that awful narrative ringing in my ears, blame him much. What struck me most forcibly was that there was no attempt, on the part of the Count, to deny the sinister part of Jenkin's story; and the rest of the Council evidently had no doubt of its truth [illegible] did it seem [illegible] lessen him a particle in their esteem. In fact, one man said, and the rest assented to the sentiment:

"Well, it is a lucky thing the villian is locked up, anyhow."

There were some among these men whose faces were not bad. Under favorable circumstances they might have been good and just men. But they were the victims of a pernicious system, as fully as were the poor, shambling, ragged wretches of the streets and slums, who had been ground down by their acts into drunkenness and crime.

"When will the outbreak come?" asked one of the Council

"That I cannot tell," said Andrews. "They seem to be waiting for something, or there is a hitch in their plans. The men are eager to break forth, and are only held back by the leaders, By their talk they are confident of success when the insurrection does come."

"What are their plans?" asked the Prince.

"They have none," replied Andrews, "except to burn, rob, destroy and murder. They have long lists of the condemned, I am told, including all those here present, and hundreds of thousands besides. They will kill all the men, women and children of the aristocracy, except the young girls, and these will be reserved for a worse fate—at least that is what the men about the beer-houses mutter between their cups."

The members of the government looked uneasy; some even were a trifle pale.

"Can you come here Wednesday night next and tell us what you learn during your visit to their 'Council of One Hundred'?" asked the Prince.

"Yes," replied Andrews—"if I am alive. But it is dangerous for me to come here"

"Wait in the library," said the Prince, "until I am at liberty, and I will give you an order for the thousand dollars I promised you; and also a key that will admit you to this house at any hour of the day or night. Gentlemen," he said, turning to his associates, "have you any further questions to ask this man?"

They had none, and Andrews withdrew.

"I think," said the Prince, "we had better reassemble here on Wednesday night. Matters are growing critical."

This was agreed to. The Prince stepped to the door and whispered a few words to Rudolph.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MASTER OF "THE DEMONS."

THE door, in a few minutes, opened, and closed behind a tall, handsome, military-looking man, in a bright uniform, with the insignia of a brigadier-general of of the United States army on his shoulders

The Prince greeted him respectfully and invited him to a seat.

"General Quincy," said the Prince, "I need not introduce you to these gentlemen; you have met them all before. I have told them that you desired to speak to them about matters relating to your command, and they are ready to hear you"

"Gentlemen," said the General, rising to his feet. "I regret to have to approach you once more in reference to the pay of the officers and men of my command I fear you will think them importunate, if not unreasonable. I am not here of my own volition, but as the mouthpiece of others Neither have I incited them to make these demands for increased pay. The officers and men seem to have a high sense of their great importance in the present condition of public affairs. They openly declare that those they maintain in power are enjoying royal affluence, which they could not possess for a single day without their aid; and therefore they claim that they should be well paid."

The General paused, and the Prince said, in his smoothest tones

"That is not an unreasonable view to take of the matter. What do they ask?"

"I have here," replied the General drawing a paper from his pocket, "a schedule of their demands, adopted at their last meeting." He handed it to the Prince

"You will see," he continued, "that it ranges from $5,000 per year, for the common soldiers, up through the different grades, to $25,000 per year for the commanding officer."

Not a man at the Council table winced at this extraordinary demand. The Prince said

"The salaries asked for are high; but they will come out of the public taxes and not from our pockets; and if you can assure me that your command, in view of this increase of compensation, will work with increased zeal, faithfulness and courage on behalf of law, order and society, I, for one, should be disposed to accede to the demand you make. What say you, gentlemen?"

There was a general expression of assent around the table.

The commander of the Demons thanked them, and assured them that the officers and men would be glad to hear that their request was granted, and that the Council might depend upon their valor and devotion in any extremity of affairs.

"Have you an abundant supply of the death-bombs on hand?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, many tons of them," was the reply.

"Are they well guarded?"

"Yes, with the utmost care. A thousand men of my command watch over them constantly."

"Your air-vessels are in perfect order?"

"Yes; we drill and exercise with them every day."

"You anticipate an outbreak?"

"Yes; we look for it any hour."

"Have you any further questions to ask General Quincy?" inquired the Prince.

"None.

He was bowed out and the door locked behind him. The Prince returned to his seat.

"Gentlemen," he said [illegible] settled, and [illegible] stand off. These men will not rest satisfied with the immense concessions we have made them; they will demand more and more as the consciousness of their power increases. They know we are afraid of them. In time they will assume the absolute control of the government, and our power will be at an end. If we resist them, they will have but to drop a few of their death-bombs through the roofs of our palaces, and it is all over with us.

"What can we do?" asked two or three.

"We must have recourse to history," he replied, "and profit by the experience of others similarly situated. In the thirteenth century the sultan of Egypt, Malek-ed-Adell the Second, organized a body of soldiery made up of slaves, bought from the Mongols, who had taken them in battle. They were called the *Bahri Mamelukes*. They formed the Sultan's body-guard. They were mounted on the finest horses in the world, and clad in the most magnificent dresses. They were of our own white race—Circassians. But Malek had unwittingly created, out of the slaves, a dangerous power. They, not many years afterward, deposed and murdered his son, and placed their general on the throne. For several generations they ruled Egypt. To circumscribe their power a new army of Mamelukes was formed, called the *Borgis*. But the cure was as bad as the disease. In 1382 the *Borgi Mamelukes* rose up, overthrew their predecessors, and made their leader, Barkok, supreme ruler. This dynasty held power until 1517, when the Ottoman Turks conquered Egypt. The Turks perceived that they must either give up Egypt or destroy the Mamelukes. They massacred them in great numbers; and, at last, Mehemet Ali beguiled four hundred and seventy of their leaders into the citadel of Cairo, and closed the gates, and ordered his mercenaries to fire upon them. But one man escaped. He leaped his horse from the ramparts and escaped unhurt, although the horse was killed by the prodigious fall.

"Now, let us apply this teaching of history. I propose that after this outbreak is over we shall order the construction of ten thousand more of these air-vessels, and this will furnish us an excuse for sending a large force of apprentices to the present command to learn the management of the ships. We will select from the circle of our relatives some young, able, reliable man to command these new troops. We will then seize upon the magazine of bombs and arrest the officers and men. We will charge them with treason. The officers we will execute, and the men we will send to prison for life; for it would not be safe, with their dangerous knowledge, to liberate them. After that we will keep the magazine of bombs and the secret of the poison in the custody of men of our own caste, so that the troops commanding the air-ships will never again feel that sense of power which now possesses them"

These plans met with general approval.

"But what are we to do with the coming outbreak?" asked one of the councillors.

"I have thought of that, too," replied the Prince "It is our interest to make it the occasion of a tremendous massacre, such as the world has never before witnessed There are too many people on the earth, anyhow In this way we will strike such terror into the hearts of the *canaille* that they will remain submissive to our will, and the domination of our children, for centuries to come

"But how will you accomplish that?" asked one

"Easily enough," replied the Prince. "You know that the first step such insurgents usually take is to tear up the streets of the city and erect barricades of stones, and earth and everything else they can lay their hands on. Heretofore we have tried to stop them My advice is that we let them alone—let them build their barricades as high and as strong as they please, and if they leave any outlets unobstructed, let our soldiers close them up in the same way. We have then got them in a rat trap, surrounded by barricades, and every street and alley outside occupied by our troops If there are a million in the trap, so much the better Then let our flock of Demons sail up over them and begin to drop their fatal bombs The whole streets within the barricades will soon be a sea of invisible poison. If the insurgents try to fly they will find in their own barricades the walls of their prison-house; and if they attempt to scale them they will be met, face to face, with our massed troops, who will be instructed to take no prisoners. If they break into the adjacent houses to escape, our men will follow from the back streets and gardens and bayonet them at their leisure, or fling them back into the poison. If ten millions are slain all over the world, so much the better. There will be more room for what are left, and the world will sleep in peace for centuries.

"These plans will be sent out, with your approval, to all our cities, and to Europe. When the rebellion is crushed in the cities, it will not take long to subdue it among the wretched peasants of the country, and our children will rule this world for ages to come."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### GABRIEL'S FOLLY.

WHILE the applause that followed this diabolical scheme rang loud and long around the council-chamber, I stood there paralyzed. My eyes dilated and my heart beat furiously. I was overwhelmed with the dreadful, the awful prospect, so coolly presented by that impassive, terrible man. My imagination was always vivid, and I saw the whole horrid reality unrolled before me like a panorama. The swarming street filled with the oppressed people; the dark shadows of the Demons floating over them; the first bomb; the terror; the confusion; the gasping of the dying; the shrieks, the groans—another and an[illegible]g here, there, every[illegible]g masses rushing from [illegible]e wild flight; the bar[illegible] fire and bayonets; the awful and continuous rattle of the guns, sounding like the grinding of some dreadful machinery that crunches the bones of the living; the recoil from the bullets to the poison; the wounded stumbling over the dead, now covering the streets in strata several feet thick; and still the bombs crash and the poison spreads. Death! death! nothing but death! *Ten million dead!* Oh, my God!

I clasped my head—it felt as if it would burst. I must save the world from such a calamity. These men are human. They cannot be insensible to an appeal for mercy—for justice!

Carried away by these thoughts, I stooped down and unclasped the hooks; I pushed aside the box; I crawled out; the next moment I stood before them in the full glare of the electric lamps.

"For God's sake," I cried, "save the world from such an awful calamity! Have pity on mankind; even as you hope that the Mind and Heart of the Universe will have pity on you. I have heard all. Do not plunge the earth into horrors that will shock the very stars in their courses. The world can be saved! It can be saved! You have power. Be pitiful. Let me go to the leaders of this insurrection and bring you together."

"He is mad," said one.

"No, no, I replied, "I am not mad. It is you that are mad. It is the wretched people who are mad—mad with suffering and misery, as you with pride and hardness of heart. You are all *men*. Hear their demands. Yield a little of your superfluous blessings; and touch their hearts with kindness, and love will spring up like flowers in the track of the harrow. For the sake of Christ Jesus, who died on the cross for *all* men, I appeal to you. Be just, be generous, be merciful. Are they not your brethren? Have they not souls like yourselves? Speak, speak, and I will toil as long as I can breathe. I will wear the flesh from off my bones, if I can reconcile the castes of this wretched society, and save civilization."

The Prince had recoiled with terror at my first entrance. He had now rallied his faculties.

"How did you come here?" he asked

Fortunately the repulsive coldness with which the Council had met my earnest appeals, which I had fairly shrieked at them, had restored to some extent the balance of my reason. The thought flashed over me that I must not betray Rudolph

"Through yonder open window," I replied

"How did you reach it?" asked the Prince.

"I climbed up the ivy vine to it."

"What did you come here for?" he asked.

"To appeal to you in the name of God, to prevent the coming of this dreadful outbreak."

"The man is a religious fanatic," said one of the Council to another; "probably one of the street preachers."

The Prince drew two or three of the leaders together, and they whispered for a few minutes. Then he went to the door and spoke to Rudolph. I caught a few words "Not leave—alive—send for Marcarius—midnight—garden"

Rudolph advanced and took me by the arm The revulsion had come I was dazed—overwhelmed There swept over me, like the rush of a flood, the dreadful thought "What will become of Estella?" I went with him like a child I was armed, but an infant might have slain me.

When we were in the hall, Rudolph said to me, in a hoarse whisper

"I heard everything You meant nobly but you were foolish—wild You might have ruined us all But there is a chance of escape yet It will be an hour before the assassin will arrive. I can secure that much delay In the meantime, be prudent and silent, and follow my directions implicitly

I promised, very humbly, to do so

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE FLIGHT AND PURSUIT

HE opened the door of a room and pushed me into it "Wait," he whispered, "for my orders" I looked around me It was Rudolph's room—the one I had been in before I was not alone. There was a young gentleman standing at a window, looking out into the garden. He turned around and advanced toward me, with his hand extended and a smile on his face It was Estella looking more charming than ever in her masculine dress. I took her hand. Then my heart smote me, and I fell upon my knees before her.

"O Estella," I cried, "pardon me. I would have sacrificed you for mankind—you that are dearer to me than the whole human race Like a fool I broke from my hiding-place, and appealed to those hearts of stone—those wild beasts—those incarnate fiends—to spare the world the most dreadful calamity it has ever known They proposed to murder *ten million human beings!* I forgot my task—my duty—you—my own safety—everything, to save the world."

Her eyes dilated as I spoke, and then, without a trace of mock modesty, without a blush, she laid her hand upon my head and said simply

"If you had done less, I should have loved you less. What am I in the presence of such a catastrophe? But if you are to die we can at least perish together. In that we have the mastery of our enemies. Our liberty is beyond their power."

"But you shall not die," I said, wildly springing to my feet. "The assassin comes! Give me the poisoned knife. When he opens the door I shall slay him I shall bear you with me. Who will dare to arrest our departure with that dreadful weapon—that instantaneous death—shining in my hand. Besides, I carry a hundred lives at my girdle. Once in the streets, we can escape."

She took from the pocket of her coat the sheathed dagger and handed it to me.

"We must, however, be guided by the counsels of Rudolph," she quietly said; "he is a faithful friend."

"True," I replied.

We sat near each other. I presumed nothing upon the great admission she had so gravely made. This was a woman to be worshipped rather than wooed. I told her all the story of my life. I described my home in that strange, wild, ancient, lofty land; my mother, my brothers the wide, old, roomy house; the trees, the flowers, the clustering, bleating sheep.

A half hour passed. The door opened A burst of laughter and the clinking of glasses resounded through it. Rudolph entered

"The Prince and his friends," he said, "make merry over their assured victory. If you will tell Maximilian all you have heard to night, the result may be different from what they anticipate. Come with me."

He led the way through a suit of two or three rooms which communicated with his apartment.

"We must throw the hounds off the scent of the fox," he said; and, to our astonishment, he proceeded to tear down the heavy curtains from two windows, having first locked the door and closed the outer shutters. He then tore the curtains into long strips, knotting them together; we pulled upon them to test their strength. He then opened one of the windows and dropped the end of the long rope thus formed out of it, fastening the other end to a heavy piece of furniture, within the room

"That will account for your escape," he said. "I have already thrown the rope ladder from the window of the room Estella occupied. These precautions are necessary for my own safety."

Then, locking the communicating doors, we returned to his room.

"Put this cloak over your shoulders," he said; "it will help disguise you. Walk boldly down these stairs," opening another door—not the one we had entered by, "turn to the right—to the right, remember—and on your left hand you will soon find a door—the first you will come to. Open it Say to the man on guard 'Show me to the carriage of Lord Southworth.' There is no such person; but that is the signal agreed upon. He will lead you to the carriage. Maximilian is the footman Farewell, and may God bless you."

We shook hands. I followed his directions; we met no one; I opened the door, the guard, as soon as I uttered the password, led me, through a mass of carriages, to where one stood somewhat back under some overhanging trees. The footman hurried to open the door. I gave my hand to Estella; she sprang in; I followed her. But this little movement of instinctive courtesy on my part toward a woman had been noticed by one of the many spies hanging around. He thought it strange that one man should offer his hand to assist another into a carriage. He whispered his suspicions to a comrade. We had hardly gone two blocks from the palace when Maximilian leaned down and said:

"I fear we are followed."

Our carriage turned into another street, and then into another. I looked out and could see—for the streets were very bright with the magnetic light—that, some distance behind us, came two carriages close together, while at a greater distance, behind them I caught sight of a third vehicle. Maximilian leaned down again and said

"We are certainly pursued by two carriages The third one I recognize as our own—the man with the bombs. We will drive to the first of the houses we have secured Be ready to spring out the moment we stop, and follow me quickly into the house, for all depends on the rapidity of our movements

In a little while the carriage suddenly stopped I took Estella's hand She needed no help Maximilian was ascending the steps of a house, key in hand We followed I looked back One of our pursuers was a block away, the other a little behind him The carriage with the bombs I could not see—it might be obscured by the trees, or it might have lost us in the fierce speed with which we had traveled

"Quick," said Maximilian, pulling us in and locking the door.

We followed him, running through a long, lighted hall, out into a garden; a gate flew open; we rushed across the street and sprang into another carriage; Maximilian leaped to his place; crack went the whip, and away we flew; but on the instant the quick eyes of my friend saw, rapidly whirling around the next corner, one of the carriages that had been pursuing us.

"They suspected our trick," said he. "Where, in heaven's name, is the man with the bombs?" he added anxiously.

Our horses were swift, but still that shadow clung to us; the streets were still and deserted, for it was after midnight; but they were as bright as if the full moon shone in an unclouded sky.

"Ah! there he comes, at last," said Maximilian, with a sigh of relief. "I feared we might meet another carriage of the police, and this fellow behind us would call it to his help, and our case would be desperate, as they would know our trick. We should have to fight for it. Now observe what takes place"

Estella, kneeling on the cushions, looked out through the glass window in the back of the carriage I leaned far out at the side.

"See, Estella," I cried, "how that hindmost team flies! They move like race horses on the course."

Nearer and nearer they come to our pursuers; they are close behind them; the driver of the front carriage seems to know that there is danger; he lashes his horses furiously; it is in vain. Now they are side by side—side by side for a time; but now our friends forge slowly ahead. The driver of the beaten team suddenly pulls his horses back on their haunches. It is too late. A man stands up on the seat of the front carriage—it is an open barouche. I could see his arm describe an arc through the air; the next instant the whole street was ablaze with a flash of brilliant red light, and the report of a tremendous explosion rang in my ears. Through the smoke and dust I could dimly see the horses of our pursuers [illegible]led in a heap up[illegible] the [illegible] kicking, plunging, dying.

"It is [illegible] now," said Maximilian quietly, and then he spoke to the driver: "Turn the next corner to the left."

After having made several changes of direction—with intent to throw any other possible pursuers off the track—and it being evident that we were not followed, except by the carriage of our friends, we drove slowly to Maximilian's house and alighted.

The sweet-faced old lady took the handsome, seeming boy, Estella, in her arms, and with hearty cordiality welcomed her to her new home. We left them together, mingling tears of joy.

Max and I adjourned to the library, and there, at his request, I told him all that had happened in the council-chamber. He smoked his cigar and listened attentively. His face darkened as I repeated the spy's story, but he neither admitted nor denied the truth of that part which I thought related to himself. When I told him about the commander of the air-ships, his interest was so great that his cigar went out, and when I narrated the conversation which occurred after General Quincy had left the room his face lighted up with a glow of joy. He listened intently to the account of the Prince's plan of battle, and smiled grimly. But when I told how I came from my hiding-place and appealed to the Oligarchy to save mankind, he rose from his chair and walked the room, profoundly agitated; and when I had finished, by narrating how Rudolph led me to his room, to the presence of Estella, he threw his arms around my neck, and said, "You dear old fool!" It was just like you;" but I could see that his eyes were wet with emotion.

Then he sat for some time in deep thought. At last he said:

"Gabriel, would you be willing to do something more to serve me?"

"Certainly," I replied; "anything."

"Would you go with me to-morrow night and tell this tale to the council of our Brotherhood? My own life and the lives of my friends, and *the liberty of one dear to me*, may depend upon your doing so"

"I shall go with you most willingly," I said. "To tell you the truth," I added, "while I cannot approve of your terrible Brotherhood, nevertheless what I have seen and heard to-night satisfies me that the Plutocrats should no longer cumber the earth with their presence. Men who can coolly plot, amid laughter, the death of ten million human beings, for the purpose of preserving their ill-gotten wealth and their ill used power, should be exterminated from the face of planet as enemies of mankind—as poisonous snakes—vermin."

He grasped my hand and thanked me.

It was pleasant to think, that night, that Estella loved me; that I had saved her; that we were under the same roof; and I wove visions in my brain brighter than the dreams of fairyland; and Estella moved everywhere amid them, a radiant angel.