

THE LORDS OF LIFE

"COME with me to the fountains of truth!" the Devil said, laughing, and he brought me to the cemetery.

As we slowly wound our way along narrow paths among the old tombstones and cast-iron slabs he spoke in the tired voice of an old professor weary of the barren preaching of his wisdom.

"Beneath your feet," he said to me, "lie the makers of the laws that you are governed by. With the sole of your boot you trample upon the ashes of the carpenters and blacksmiths who wrought a cage for the beast you have inside you."

He laughed as he said this, and the laugh was full of a scourging contempt for people; the grass on the graves and the mould on the tombstones were flooded with the cold, dismal light of his greenish eyes. The rich soil of the dead stuck to my feet in heavy clods, and it was difficult to walk along the footpaths, among the tombstones which marked the graves of worldly wisdom.

"Man, why don't you bend low in gratitude before the dust of those who moulded your soul?" the Devil said in a voice which was like the draught of a damp autumnal wind. It sent a shiver down my spine, and my heart was chilled and wrung with a dreary disquiet. The melancholy

trees above the graves swayed gently, brushing my face with their cold, moist branches.

"Pay homage to the counterfeiters! It is they who wrought the cloud banks of petty grey thoughts that are the small coin of your intellect. It is they who formed your habits, your prejudices, and all you live by. Give them your thanks—the dead have left you a tremendous legacy!"

Yellow leaves slowly floated down on my head and dropped at my feet. The graveyard soil gave out a greedy smacking sound as it gorged on fresh food: the dead leaves of autumn.

"Here lies a tailor who clothed the souls of men in heavy grey robes of prejudice. Would you care to take a look at him?"

I nodded in acquiescence. The Devil kicked the old rust-eaten slab on one of the graves, he kicked it and he said:

"Hey, you, bookwright! Get up. . . ."

The slab rose, there was a heavy sigh of disturbed slush, and a shallow grave, like a worm-eaten purse, was revealed. From out of its wet murk came a querulous voice:

"Who ever heard of waking the dead after twelve?"

"You see?" the Devil said with a grin. "The makers of the laws of life are true to themselves even after they rot away."

"Oh, it's you, Master!" the skeleton said, seating himself on the edge of the grave and greeting the Devil with an independent nod of his hollow skull.

"Yes, it's me!" the Devil replied. "I brought one of my friends to see you. . . . He has grown stupid among

the men you taught wisdom, and now has come to its primary source to be cured of his infection. . . .”

I looked at the sage with proper deference. No flesh was left on his skull, but the look of smug self-content had not faded from his face. Each bone shone dully with the consciousness of its belonging to a system of bones of absolute perfection, to a unique system. . . .

“Tell us what you did on earth,” the Devil suggested.

Haughtily and pompously the dead man smoothed down with the bones of his arms the dark shreds of shroud and flesh that hung like a pauper’s rags on his ribs. Then he proudly raised the bones of his right arm shoulder level, and, pointing with the bare joint of his finger into the darkness of the graveyard, he began to speak calmly and impassively:

“I wrote ten big books which impressed on the people’s minds the great idea of the superiority of the white race over the coloured. . . .”

“Translated into the language of truth,” the Devil rejoined, “it would sound like this: I, a sterile old maid, have all my life used the dull needle of my mind to knit foolscaps from the frayed wool of threadbare ideas for those who like to keep their skulls in quiet and warmth. . . .”

“Aren’t you afraid of offending him?” I quietly asked the Devil.

“Oh!” he exclaimed. “Men of wisdom lend but a poor ear to truth even when they’re alive.”

“Only the white race,” the sage went on, “could have created so advanced a civilization and worked out such strict moral principles, thanks to the colour of its skin.”

and the chemical composition of its blood, as I proved. . . .”

“He proved it!” the Devil echoed with a nod of assent. “There is no barbarian more settled in his belief that cruelty is his right than a European. . . .”

“Christianity and humanism are the products of the white race,” the dead man continued.

“Of a race of angels who should rule the world,” the Devil broke in. “That is why they so zealously dye it their favourite colour—red, the colour of blood. . . .”

“They have created great literature, introduced miraculous technical achievements,” the dead man enumerated, twitching his finger bones. . . .

“Some thirty good books and countless guns for the extermination of men . . .” the Devil explained with a laugh. “Where else is life so broken up and man brought so low as among the whites?”

“Could it be that the Devil is not always right?” I ventured.

“The art of the Europeans has reached an immeasurable height,” the skeleton muttered in a dull, rasping voice.

“Say rather that the Devil would like to be mistaken!” my companion exclaimed. “It’s terribly boring to always be right. But men live only so as to give food to my scorn. . . . The seeds of vulgarity and falsehood yield the richest harvests in the world. Here is one of the sowers before you now. Like all of them—he did not bring forth anything new, he only revived the corpses of old prejudices by clothing them in the garb of new words. . . . What has been done on earth? Palaces have been built for the few, churches and factories for the many. Souls are slaught-

ered in the churches and bodies in the factories, so that the palaces may stand intact. . . . Men are sent deep down into the earth for coal and gold—and in payment for this degrading work they get a piece of bread seasoned with lead and steel.”

“Are you a socialist?” I asked the Devil.

“I want harmony!” he replied. “It makes me sick when man, by nature an entity, is shattered into matchwood, made a tool for the greedy hand of another. I don’t want slaves—slavery is repulsive to my spirit. . . . That is why I was banished from heaven. Where idols exist, spiritual slavery is inevitable and the mould of falsehood will ever spread. . . . Let the earth live—all of it! Let it burn all day even though nothing but ashes are left of it by night. Once in their lives all people ought to fall in love. . . . Love, like a wondrous dream, comes only once, but in this one moment there is all the meaning of existence. . . .”

The skeleton stood leaning against a black rock, and the wind moaned softly in the empty cage of his ribs.

“He must be cold and uncomfortable,” I said to the Devil.

“I enjoy looking at a scientist who has freed himself of everything superfluous. His skeleton is the skeleton of his idea. . . . I can see how original it was. . . . Next to this one lie the remains of another sower of truth. . . . Let’s wake him, too. In their lifetime they all like peace and quiet, and they labour to devise codes of thought, sentiments and life—they distort newborn ideas and make cosy little coffins for them. But after death—they want to be remembered. . . . Comprachikos—get up! I’ve brought you a man who needs a coffin for his thoughts.”

And once again a bare and empty skull, toothless, yellow, yet glistening with self-satisfaction, emerged from the earth. He must have been lying below ground for a long time—his bones were bare of flesh. He stood by his tombstone, and his ribs were silhouetted against the black stone like the stripes on the uniform of an officer of the court.

"Where does he keep his ideas?" I inquired.

"In his bones, my friend, in his bones! Their ideas are like rheumatism or gout—they penetrate deep into the ribs."

"How is my book selling, Master?" the skeleton asked in a flat voice.

"It's still lying on the shelves, Professor!" the Devil replied.

"Why, have people forgotten how to read?" the professor brought out after a moment's reflection.

"No, they still read nonsense quite willingly—but boring nonsense sometimes has to wait a long while before it claims their attention. . . . The professor here," said the Devil turning to me, "spent his whole life measuring women's skulls to prove that a woman is not a human being. He measured hundreds of skulls, he counted teeth, he measured ears, he weighed dead brain matter. Working with dead brains was the professor's favourite occupation. All his books] evidence this. Have you] read them?"

"I don't walk into a temple through a pub," I rejoined, "and I don't know how to study human beings by reading about them—people in books are always fractions, and I'm weak in arithmetic. But I do think that a human being who has no beard and goes around in a skirt is no

better and no worse than one who has a beard and a moustache and wears pants. . . .”

“Yes,” said the Devil, “vulgarity and stupidity invade the brain regardless of what you wear and the abundance of hair on your head. But, still, that problem of women has been quaintly put.” At this the Devil laughed, as was his wont, which is one reason why it’s so pleasant to chat with him. He who can laugh in a graveyard loves life and loves men—assuredly. . . .

“Some, who require a woman only as a wife and slave, maintain that she is not a human being at all,” he went on. “Others would like to exploit her working energy without refusing to use her as a woman, and these claim that she is no less suited for work than a man and can work on an equal basis with him, that is, for him. But, of course, they neither of them would admit a girl they had raped into their society—they are convinced that after they touch her she remains forever sullied. . . . Yes, the feminine problem is frightfully amusing! I like it when men tell naïve lies—at such moments they resemble children, and one has hope that in time they will grow up. . . .”

I could see by the Devil’s face that he had no intention of saying anything flattering about the men of the future. But since I myself can say much that is not flattering about the men of today, and, as I had no desire to have the Devil compete with me in this pleasant and easy pastime, I interrupted him:

“There’s a saying that where the Devil hasn’t time to go himself he sends a woman. Is that true?”

He shrugged his shoulders and said, “It does happen. . . . If there’s no man around who is clever and mean enough. . . .”

"It strikes me somehow that you've lost your love of evil," I challenged.

"There is no such thing as evil any more!" he replied with a sigh. "Only vulgarity! Evil was once a power that had beauty. And now—even when men are killed it is grossly done: first their hands are tied. There are no more villains left—only henchmen. And a henchman is nothing but a slave, a hand and an axe set in motion by the power of fright, by the twinges of fear. . . . Men kill those they are afraid of. . . ."

Two skeletons stood side by side at their graves, and the leaves of autumn slowly drifted down on their bones. The wind dolefully played on the strings of their ribs and howled in the voids of their skulls. Humid and strong-scented darkness looked out from the deep sockets of their eyes. They were both shivering. I felt sorry for them.

"Let them go back to their places!" I entreated.

"So you are a humanist even in the graveyard!" he exclaimed. "Well, humanism is far more in place among the dead: here it can offend no one. In prisons and mines, in the factories, on city squares and streets, wherever there are living people, humanism is ridiculous and is even apt to kindle wrath. Here there is no one to mock at it—the dead are always serious. And I am certain that they enjoy hearing about humanism—after all, it is their stillborn child. . . . No, they weren't idiots, those who wanted to place this splendid side scene on the stage of life to cover the black horror of man persecuted, and the cold cruelty of a small group which owes its strength to the stupidity of all men. . . ."

And the Devil broke into a laugh, the harsh laugh of ominous truth.

Stars quivered in the dark sky. The black stones stood motionless above the graves of the past. A rotting smell broke through the earth, and the wind carried the breath of the dead into the drowsy city streets that were enveloped by the stillness of the night.

"There are quite a few humanists lying here," the Devil went on, taking in the graves about him with a sweeping gesture. "Some of them were actually sincere—there are plenty of droll contradictions in life, and maybe this one isn't the funniest. . . . And next to them, peacefully and amicably, there lie men of another type, the teachers of life who attempted to lay a solid foundation under the old edifice of lies that was so painstakingly and laboriously erected by thousands upon thousands of the dead. . . ."

From afar came the sound of singing. . . . Two or three gleeful cries floated, quivering, over the cemetery. Some reveler, most likely, tramping lightheartedly in the dark to his grave.

"Under this heavy stone there proudly rots the body of a sage who taught that society is an organism similar to a monkey or a pig—I've forgotten which now. It's just the right thing for people who like to consider themselves the brain of the organism. Nearly all politicians and most of the gangster ringleaders are adherents of this theory. If I'm the brain, why, then I can move the hands at will and I'd always be able to overcome the instinctive resistance of the muscles to my regal power—oh, yes! And here rests the dust of one who urged men to go back to the time when they walked on all fours and devoured worms. Those were the happiest days of existence, he insisted. To walk around on your two feet wearing a well-

fitting frock coat and advise people to grow hairy again like their ancestors—isn't that what you'd call original? To read poetry, listen to music, go to museums, be transferred hundreds of miles in a day, and to teach people to go back to a primitive life in the forests and to crawl on all fours—not half bad, really! Now this one here tried to pacify people and justified the kind of life they led by claiming that criminals were not like other people, that they were men of sick will, a kind of peculiar antisocial type. He maintained that since they were natural enemies of the laws and morals of society, there was no reason to stand on ceremony with them, and he affirmed that death was the only cure for those addicted to crime. Bright idea that! Make one individual responsible for the crimes of all by recognizing him for a natural receptacle of vice and an organic bearer of evil—not foolish at all. You can always find someone who will try to justify the ugly, soul-distorting structure of life. The wise won't even blow their noses without a good reason. Ah, yes, the graveyards abound in ideas for a bettering of conditions of life in the towns. . . .”

The Devil took a look round him. A white church, like the finger of a giant skeleton, mutely rose from the copious field of the dead and pointed up at the dark sky, a still meadow of stars. A thick wall of stones above the fountains of wisdom, dressed in robes of mould, surrounded this chimney, which sent across the wastes of the universe the stinging smoke of the complaints and prayers of men. The wind, drugged with the oily smell of decay, softly swayed the branches of the trees, snipping off the dead leaves which noiselessly fell onto the dwellings of the makers of life. . . .

"Now we'll organize a small parade of the dead, a rehearsal for the Day of Judgment!" the Devil said as he marched ahead of me down a path that wound like a snake among the mounds and stones. "The Judgment Day will come, you know! It will come here, on earth, and it will be humanity's happiest day! It will come when men will realize the immensity of the crimes committed by the teachers and lawmakers of life who tore the human being up into worthless pieces of senseless flesh and bone. All that now goes under the name of man is but a part of him. A wholehearted man has not yet been created. He will rise up from the ashes of experience lived through by the world, and, absorbing the world's experience like the sea absorbs the rays of the sun, he will flame out over the earth like another sun. I shall see it! I am creating this man, and he shall be!"

The old man was beginning to brag a little and to lapse into a lyrical mood which was rather unusual for a devil. I forgave him. What can be done? Life warps even the Devil, eating away with its poisonous acids his well-forged soul. Then again, all men have round heads, but their thoughts are angular, and everyone, when he looks in the mirror, sees a handsome face.

Pausing in his steps in the midst of some graves, the Devil bellowed in the voice of a monarch:

"Who among you is a wise and honest man?"

There was a moment of silence, then—suddenly—the ground rocked under my feet, and, it was as if drifts of dirty snow had covered the hills, as if thousands of lightnings had ploughed it through inside, or as if some giant monster had stirred convulsively within its depths. Everything about us flushed a dirty yellow; everywhere, like

the blades of dry grass in the wind, the skeletons waved and shook, filling the surrounding quiet with the grating of bones and the dry rub of joints against one another and against the tombstones. Jostling each other, the skeletons crept out on the stones; skulls popped out everywhere like dandelions; a thick net of ribs surrounded me like a narrow cage; the skeletons' shins were tense and quivering under the weight of their gruesomely gaping hipbones; everything round us seethed, a mute ferment of activity. . . .

The cold laugh of the Devil drowned out all the impersonal sounds.

"Look. They've all crawled out, every last one of them," he said. "Even the town halfwits. The earth felt sick and it vomited, throwing up from its bowels the dead wisdom of men. . . ."

The soggy noise grew steadily—it was as if some invisible hand were greedily rummaging in a heap of wet litter, swept by the garbage man into a corner of the yard.

"Look at the number of wise and honest men that lived in the world!" the Devil exclaimed, spreading his wings wide above the thousands of broken fragments that pressed close to him on all sides.

"Which of you has done people the most good?" he asked in a loud voice.

There was a noise like mushrooms sizzling when they are fried in sour cream on a large pan.

"Let me through, please!" someone cried in a peevish voice.

"I'm your man, Boss, I'm your man! It was I who proved that the individual is a zero in the sum of society."

"I went even further than he," a voice called out protestingly from afar, "I taught that all of society is a sum of zeros, and that because of this the masses must do what the group wills."

"And the group is led by the individual—that is, by me!" someone roared in a pompous bass.

"Why you?" several voices rejoined in alarm.

"My uncle was a king!"

"Ah, then it was Your Majesty's uncle whose head was cut off so prematurely?"

"Kings always lose their heads when they should," the bones of a descendant of bones who had once sat on the throne proudly returned.

"Oho!" someone brought out in a delighted whisper. "There's a king among us! It isn't every graveyard that can boast of that. . . ."

Significant murmurs and the grating of bones were beginning to merge into a tangle of sound that steadily became heavier and more dense.

"Look here, is it true that the bones of royalty are blue in colour?" a stunted skeleton with a crooked spine breathlessly inquired.

"Let me tell you. . . ." a skeleton who sat astride a monument impressively began.

"The best corn plaster is one invented by me!" someone behind him cried.

"I am the architect. . . ."

But a short squat skeleton, pushing everyone away with the stumpy bones of his hands, shouted, his voice muffling the rustle of other dead voices:

"Brothers in Christ! Am not I your spiritual physician? Did not I use the plaster of gentle solace to remove

the callosities from your souls, that were caused by the misery in your lives?

"There are no sufferings!" someone declared in a nettled tone, "Everything exists in imagination only."

"... the architect who deiced low-structured doors..."

"And I invented flypaper!"

"... so that people as they entered a house would inevitably bow their heads before its owner..." the irksome voice persisted.

"Does not priority belong to me, brethren? It was I who gave those who craved forgetfulness the sustenance of my meditations on the vanity of all things worldly!"

"All that is—shall be!" someone's rasping voice droned.

A one-legged skeleton, who sat on a grey stone, raised his leg, stretched it out, and yelled for some reason or other:

"No doubt of that!"

The graveyard turned into a market where everyone lauded his goods. A turbid river of stifled cries, a flood of foul bluster and crass vanity rushed into the dark and silent waste of night. It was as if a cloud of gnats were circling over a putrid swamp, and droning, wailing, buzzing, while it instilled the air with its noxious fumes, with all the poisonous vapours of the graves. Everyone was crowding about the Devil, their teeth clenched and their dark eye sockets fixed unmovingly on his face as though he were a dealer in old junk. Dead thoughts revived one after another, spinning in the air like the dreary leaves of fall.

The Devil watched this bubbling ferment with his green eyes, their cold stare flooding the heaps of bones with a shimmering phosphoric light.

The skeleton who sat at his feet raised his arm bones above his skull and, swinging them rhythmically in the air, said:

"Every woman should belong to one man. . . ."

Another sound stole into his whisper, and the words he said were strangely entangled with another's speech.

"Only the dead have a knowledge of truth! . . ."

More words came:

"The father, said I, is like a spider. . . ."

"Our life on the earth is a chaos of delusions, a mire of stark ignorance!"

"I was thrice married, and all three times lawfully. . . ."

"All his life he ceaselessly weaves the web of the family's welfare. . . ."

". . . and to one woman each time. . . ."

A skeleton, whose yellow, porous bones creaked shrilly, suddenly appeared. He raised his half-decayed face to the level of the Devil's eyes and said:

"I died of syphilis, yes! But still I had respect for the morals of society! When I found my wife to be untrue to me I myself brought her case up before a court of law and the justice of society and had her tried for her infamous conduct. . . ."

But he was pushed away, jostled on all sides by the bones of other skeletons, and a multitude of voices broke out again in a low howling drone like that of the wind in a chimney.

"I invented the electric chair! It takes away life quite painlessly. . . ."

"After death, I said to the people in solace, eternal bliss awaits you. . . ."

"The father gives the children life and food . . . a man is only complete when he becomes a father, till then he is but a member of a family. . . ."

A skeleton with a skull shaped like an egg and with shreds of flesh on his face called out above the heads of the others:

"I proved that art must be made to conform with the whole complex of the views and opinions, habits and needs of society. . . ."

Another skeleton, who sat astride a monument that was supposed to represent a broken tree, retorted:

"Freedom can only exist in the form of anarchy!"

"Art is a pleasant cure for a soul tired of life and of work. . . ."

"It was I who alleged that life is work," a voice called from afar.

"A book must be as pretty as the little pill-boxes you get in a pharmacy. . . ."

"All people must work and some of them must oversee the work. . . . All those whose virtues and merits make them deserving are entitled to the fruit of their labour. . . ."

"Art must be altruistic and harmonious. . . . When I get tired I want it to sing to me of leisure. . . ."

"And I prefer free art," the Devil said, "which serves no other deity but the goddess of beauty. I love it when, like a chaste youth, who dreams of immortal beauty and craves to delight in it, it tears the bright garments off the body of life . . . and life stands before it, an old libertine, her worn skin covered with wrinkles and sores. A mad wrath, a longing for beauty, a hatred for the stagnant mire of life—that is what I seek in art. . . . A good poet's friends are the Devil and the woman. . . ."

A loud moan of copper broke from the bell tower and drifted over the city of the dead, swaying liltily and imperceptibly in the dark, like a large bird with transparent wings. . . . A sleepy watchman must have lazily pulled the bell rope with a lax, unsteady hand. The brazen sound melted in the air and died. But before its last thrill had faded, the bell of night, roused and alert, rang out sharp and clear. The sultry air vibrated softly, and through the gloomy drone of quivering copper there stole the rustle of bones, and the crackle of dry voices.

Again I heard the dull tirades of boring stupidity, the sticky words of dead vulgarity, the insolent voices of triumphant hypocrisy, the vexed grumble of self-conceit. All the thoughts that people live in in the towns came to life, but not one of which they could be proud. All the rusty chains that fetter the soul of life jangled and clanged, but the light that illumines the darkness of men's souls flared never once.

"Where are the heroes?" I asked of the Devil.

"They are modest, and their graves are forgotten. They were oppressed in life, and in the graveyard, too, the dead bones crush them!" he replied, waving his wings to dispel the oily smell of decay that closed in on us like a dark cloud in which the grey, dull voices of the dead dug like worms.

The shoemaker said that he was the first among the people of his profession who deserved the gratitude of his descendants since it was he who invented narrow-toed boots. A scientist who had described a thousand different varieties of spiders in his book averred that he was the greatest of all scientists. An inventor of artificial milk

whimpered angrily, pushing back the man who had invented a rapid-fire gun and who stubbornly kept explaining to everyone around him the usefulness of his invention to the world. Thousands of thin, moist ropes tightened on the brain, driving into it like the fangs of a snake. And all the dead, no matter what their subject, spoke like severe moralists, like the gaolers of life who are enraptured by the work they are doing.

"Enough!" roared the Devil, "I'm tired of this. . . . I'm sick of everything I see in the graveyards of the dead and in the towns, the graveyards of the living. . . . You, there, guards of truth! Go to your graves! . . ."

His voice was the steel voice of a sovereign who was disgusted with the power that was his.

At this the ash-grey and yellow mass hissed, stirred, and foamed like the dust on the road when hit by a whirlwind. The earth opened thousands of its dark jaws, and, with a lazy, smacking sound, like that made by a sow that has had its fill, it swallowed once more the food it had thrown up and began to digest it anew. . . . All at once everything vanished, the stones veered and fell back into their places to stand there as firmly and unmovingly as ever. But an oppressive smell that clutched at the throat like a heavy, moist hand still lingered.

The Devil seated himself on one of the graves, and, resting his elbows on his knees, he squeezed his head with the long fingers of his black hands. His eyes were fixed immovably on the mass of stones and graves in the surrounding dark. . . . The stars shone brilliantly above him; up in the sky that had grown visibly lighter the bold chimes of the bell drifted quietly, rousing the night from its sleep.

"Did you see that?" the Devil said to me. "On the perilous, slimy, poisonous soil of mouldy stupidity, artless hypocrisy, and sticky vulgarity a dark, confining structure of the laws of life has been erected, a cage into which you were all driven by the dead like sheep. . . . Mental sluggishness and cowardice bind your prison cage like flexible bands. The true lords of your life are the dead; and even though you may be governed by living people they, too, are inspired by the dead. The graves are the sources of worldly wisdom. I say to you: your common sense is a flower that blooms on soil fed by the juices of dead bodies. The corpse soon rots away in the grave, yet he desires to live forever in the souls of the living. The fine, dry dust of dead ideas easily penetrates into the brain of the living; that is why your preachers of wisdom are always preachers of the death of the spirit!"

The Devil raised his hand, and his green eyes rested on my face like two cold stars.

"What is being propagated most actively here on earth? What is it men seek to establish as an immutable law? It is the fractioning of life; the lawfulness of different conditions of life for the people and the necessity for a oneness of their souls; a bricklike monotony of souls to make it convenient to lay them out in the geometrical figures desirable to the few who govern. This sermon hypocritically calls for the conciliation of the bitterness of the enslaved with the cruel duplicity of the enslavers; it was called forth by a base desire to make away with the free spirit of protest. It is nothing but an infamous plan to build a vault of the stones of falsehood for man's free spirit. . . ."

Dawn set in. The stars faded quietly in the sky, pale in expectation of the sun. But the eyes of the Devil burned brighter as he went on speaking.

"What should men be taught so they will learn to make their lives whole and beautiful?—A oneness of conditions for all and a differentiation of souls. Then life will become a bush of flowers, the roots of which will draw strength from the respect of all for the freedom of each man. It will be a fire fed by the glowing coals of mutual friendship and the common strife to rise higher. . . . Only ideas will fight then, men will stay comrades always. Do you think it's impossible?—I say it will be because it has not yet been!"

"Day is dawning!" the Devil went on, looking east. "But will the sun bring joy when night sleeps in man's very heart? The people have no time to enjoy the sun, most of them want only bread—some of them are busy giving out as little as possible of it; others move through the bustle of life in a lonely search for freedom, but it eludes them in their ceaseless struggle for bread. Miserable, despairing, embittered by their loneliness, they attempt to conciliate the irreconcilable. Thus do the best of men drown in the slime of vulgar lies—first, innocently, without noticing their faithlessness to themselves; then consciously, with a deliberate betrayal of their earlier beliefs and ideas. . . ."

He rose and spread his powerful wings.

"I think I'll go, too, along the road of my expectations towards a future of splendid possibilities. . . ."

And, followed by the dreary chiming of the bell—a dying clang of copper, he flew west. . . .

* * *

I told this dream to an American who seemed more like a human being than the rest. He became pensive for a moment, and then exclaimed with a smile:

“I get it! The Devil was an agent of a firm that deals in incinerators! Of course! All that he said was meant to show the need to cremate the dead. . . . But he was a very competent agent, let me tell you! He was so eager to accommodate his firm that he even appeared in people's dreams. . . .”