

Idler Meets Mr. Machine-Man

Paul Ross

IDLER PAUSED to brush the beads of sweat, worry, from his forehead. He watched as the droplets fell to the dusty road of Life, landing in the footprint of the traveler several yards ahead of him. He studied the footprints, concluding that they were made by a person in great haste. This realization caused a cloud of gloom to pass over Idler's face, for he hated to see anyone in such a predicament. No person in this world can be enjoying himself when he has imbibed that destructive potion, Hurry, as this poor soul has evidently done, he decided.

Lengthening his stride, he was able to overtake his fellow traveler. Coming abreast of him, Idler recognized the man.

"Why, hello, Mr. Machine-Man."

Mr. Machine-Man turned, still maintaining his steady swift pace, and mumbled a word of greeting.

"What is your destination, sir?" Idler inquired.

"The city of Daily Living, you Lazybones," was the gruff reply.

"I resent your epithet, for truly I am not as you say."

"No matter. I am too busy to spend time bothering with trifles."

Idler was becoming weary from the rapid pace of walking.

"Do you not have the time to rest awhile and converse with me?"

"No. However if you desire to talk, you may do so and accompany me on my way."

For a few minutes they walked in silence. Then Idler spoke.

"What are your stops on this journey over the road of Life?"

"Eat, Sleep, and Work."

"But are you not going to visit elsewhere? Those places are mere villages compared to the cities I frequent."

"No, those are the only towns on the way to Daily Living, and I spend my time there according to a strict schedule. Besides no other towns exist which can measure up to my three."

"Oh, but there are. The trouble with you is that you are addicted to Hurry, which causes one to see only the three villages you mention. In this complex state, Modern Society, we are living under the terrible influence of that drug. Never realizing its destructive powers, we citizens gleefully gulp our portion each day and become conscious of nothing other than Eat, Sleep, and Work. These villages are continuous, one taking up where the preceding left off. Hurry has injected into our brains the impression that these are the only points of interest on the route to Daily Living; it incites us to pass through Eat and Sleep quickly so that we may spend more time laboring feverishly in the thriving community of Work. We become a machine, like you, with our goal consisting actually of one monotonous routine. The possibility that there may be other cities has never occurred to us. I have found others, though, and the atmosphere within these cities is soothing, a diversion from the routine of Eat, Sleep, and Work. Most of the cities are in the neighboring counties of Relaxation and Enjoyment, but the short trip is worth anyone's while. In the limits of these comforting cities we may find that envied nectar, Pleasure."

Idler's discourse had caused Mr. Machine-Man unconsciously to slow down. Obviously puzzled, he looked quizzically at his companion.

"You know, I think that I have formed an entirely wrong impression of you. You do know what you are talking about. However, I am afraid that I have fallen under the spell of Hurry so completely that I am unable to see any roads to Relaxation and Enjoyment."

Idler reached into his coat pocket and took out a map. Handing it to Mr. Machine-Man, he said, "If you follow the directions on that map, you will have no trouble in finding the two counties. Be sure to drink Pleasure when you arrive, for it will immediately offset the effects of Hurry."

Idler smiled when he saw Mr. Machine-Man's face brighten as he accepted the map and started off on a new route to Daily Living.